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OF ROME AND
THE TERRIBLE
KINGS



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Welcome

The year is 14 CE. Augustus, the first leader of the Roman Empire lies on his deathbed. He has managed to end years of civil war and usher in a new era. While Ancient Rome has existed for over 700 years before him, thanks to his hard work, it will be around, in some form or another, for over 1,000 years more.

Ancient Rome - kingdom, republic and empire - has inspired countries, laws, inventions and more ever since its fall. Now we take a look back at this legendary civilisation, its mythical founding and what it has done for us. Walk the aqueducts, take a front seat at the Colosseum and head to the front lines to truly understand what made the Romans tick.

But what about the people themselves? Meet ten of Ancient Rome's most despicable characters, join about the emperor who brought Christianity to the pagan empire, and find out why the last Roman King was overthrown in a bloody coup. Ancient Rome certainly wasn't for the faint-hearted.

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YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT

ANCIENT ROME

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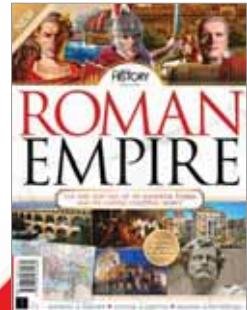
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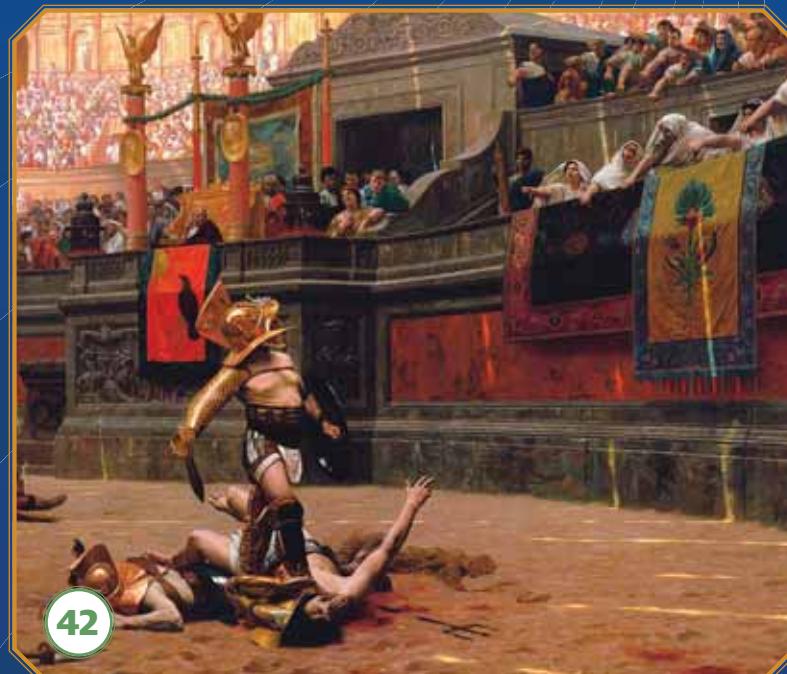
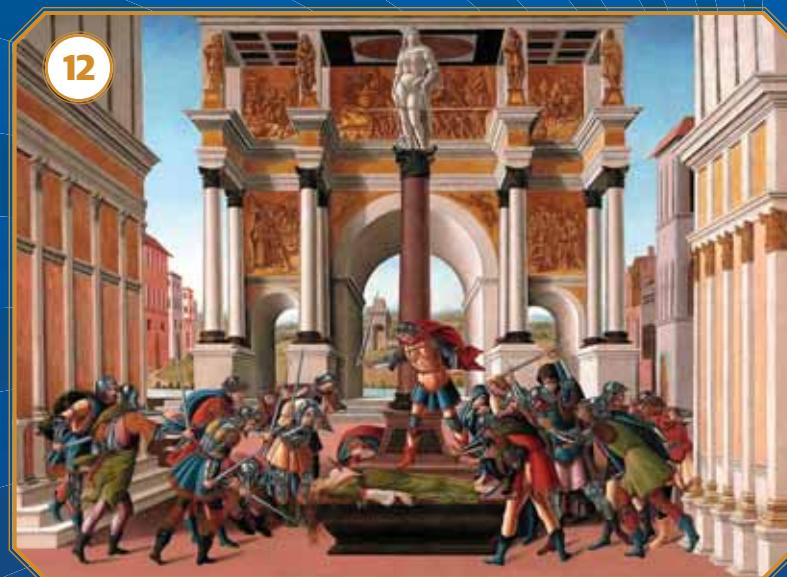
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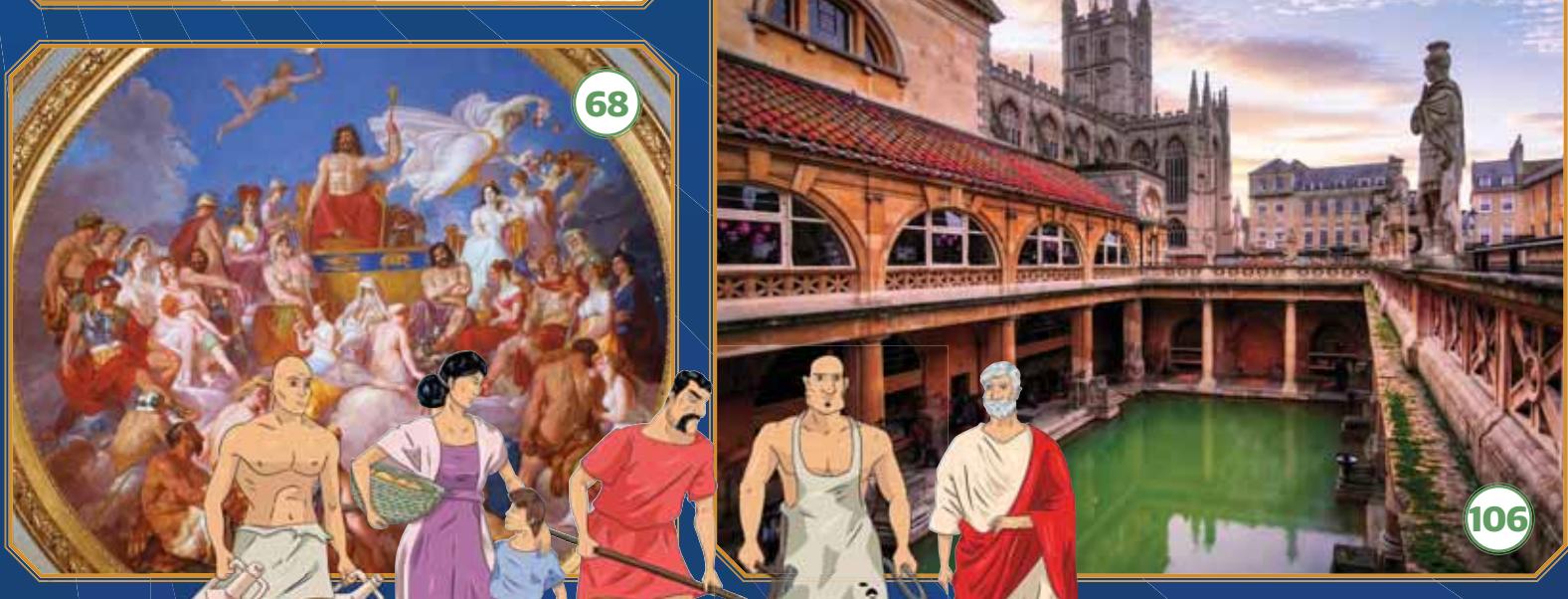


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this edition of **All About History**
Roman Empire

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THE FOUNDING OF ROME

The mythical origins behind one of the greatest cities in the world

Words Jessica Leggett



According to mythology, Rome was founded on 21 April 753 BCE by twin brothers Romulus and Remus. Their mother, Rhea Silvia, was the daughter of King Numitor of Alba Longa, who is thought to have been a descendant of Aeneas, the Trojan hero, son of Venus and around whom Virgil's epic poem, the *Aeneid*, was centred.

Numitor's throne was usurped by his younger brother, Amulius, who forced Rhea to become a Vestal Virgin to prevent her from giving birth to any heirs who could rival his claim. Although Rhea took the vow of celibacy, she was subsequently raped by Mars, the god of war, and gave birth to twin boys.

Angered, Amulius had Rhea imprisoned and ordered that the boys should be drowned in the Tiber River. Instead, their basket drifted down the river and they washed up ashore underneath a fig tree. It was here that a she-wolf discovered the twins and suckled them, while it is said that a woodpecker found them food. The two animals were considered sacred to Mars.

Eventually, the boys were found and raised by a shepherd named Faustulus and his wife. Romulus and Remus grew up to become shepherds like their adoptive father. While out herding their sheep one day, they became embroiled in an argument between the supporters of Numitor and Amulius. Remus was captured and taken to Alba Longa, so Romulus headed to the city to free his brother.

Shortly afterwards, the boys discovered their true identities and sought revenge against Amulius by killing him and restoring their grandfather, Numitor, to the throne.

The twins then returned to the place where they had been saved as babies and decided to found a new city there. But an argument quickly ensued, possibly over the location of their new city, as it is said that Romulus wanted to build it on the Palatine Hill while Remus preferred the Aventine Hill. They may have also been fighting over who would get to rule their new city. When Romulus started building the city wall, Remus jumped over it, mocking its size. Romulus killed him and named the new city Rome.

To populate his new city, Romulus offered asylum to fugitives and exiles. Realising that he also needed women to join them, he invited his neighbours, the Sabines, to a festival. He then seized the opportunity to abduct their young women, which triggered a war between the two groups. In the end, a peace treaty was arranged that united the two groups under one nation, establishing joint rule under both Romulus and Titus Tatius, the Sabine king. When Tatius was murdered just five years later, Romulus was left as the sole ruler.

After ruling for 37 years, Romulus vanished during a violent thunderstorm. The mysterious circumstances surrounding his disappearance led to speculation that he had been murdered by his senior advisors, who then hid his body. This caused outrage among the Roman people and tensions in the city began to rise. To deal

with these rumours, it was announced that Romulus had been taken to heaven by Mars, which led many to believe that their king had become a god himself. As a result, Romulus was worshipped by many as a deity, assuming the name of Quirinus.

This myth about Rome's founding appeared in the 4th century BCE, 400 years after it supposedly took place. The exact date that is generally used today was first decided on by Titus Pomponius Atticus, a wealthy Roman banker, and later adopted by the great scholar Varro. The story was famously recounted in *The History of Rome* by Titus Livius, the Roman historian more commonly known as Livy.

Rome was ultimately built to the east of the Tiber River on seven hills, including the Palatine and the Aventine, with the site known today as 'The Seven Hills Of Rome'. In recent years, archaeologists have uncovered evidence of a wall that was constructed sometime between the 9th and the 8th centuries BCE - before the official date given for the founding of Rome - and there is evidence suggesting that people were living on the Palatine Hill back in the 10th century BCE.

However much of it is true, the story of Romulus and Remus certainly impacted the development of Roman identity and attitudes - for example, the she-wolf was adopted as the symbol of nationality when the Republic was established in c.509 BCE. We may never know the true origins of Rome, but they will undoubtedly continue to fascinate us for centuries to come.



"A she-wolf discovered the twins and suckled them, while a woodpecker found them food"

Nicolas Mignard's painting *The Shepherd Faustulus Bringing Romulus and Remus to His Wife* hangs in the Dallas Museum Of Art

THE ROMAN KINGDOM 753 BCE - 509 BCE

Rome is founded/ Romulus becomes king

753 BCE

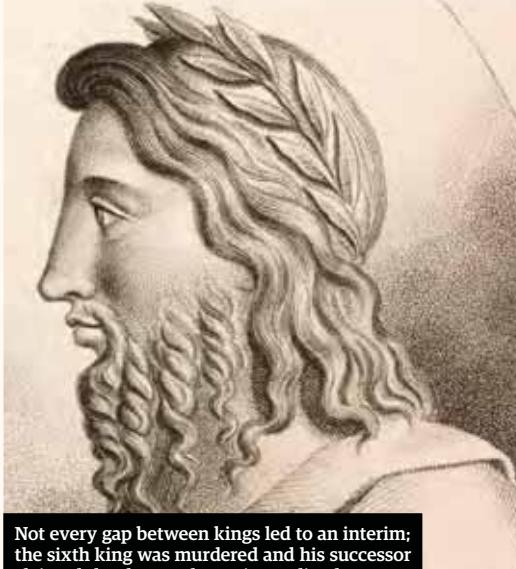
Once a series of warring tribes and clans, the strongest among them are united underneath the warrior general Romulus. He installs himself as king and forms the very first incarnation of the Senate. The eldest members from the most powerful and influential gentes (clans) are chosen, Italy's deeply patriarchal makeup placing a great deal of importance on the wisdom of its older male members. Around 100 members are chosen by Romulus, and the Senate begins by taking care of the day-to-day running of the kingdom. Together, the very first laws of the land are written and the first standing armies formed.



The interim begins

716 BCE

Following the apparent death of Romulus, by order of the Senate, Rome enters an interregnum. This is a period of year or less where the traditional form of government simply does not exist, where one king has died but another has yet to be determined. The democratic principles of the Roman Kingdom state that only the Senate or a similar body has the power to make a king, so over a period of a year, ten different men rule the kingdom one after the other. This provides the Senate with the information it needs to select one of them as the next king.



Not every gap between kings led to an interim; the sixth king was murdered and his successor claimed the throne almost immediately

The Roman style of architecture lives on in the 18th-century neoclassical style that can be seen to this day

Romulus passes away

Around 716 BCE, Romulus mysteriously disappears during a storm. Some legends say he was murdered, but the reality is that the kingdom no longer has a king.

716 BCE

753 BCE

716 BCE

715 BCE

673 BCE

Tullus Hostilius becomes king

After a short interregnum, the candidate Tullus Hostilius is selected as king. Unlike his predecessor, Hostilius is a monarch more interested in conquest than peace.

673 BCE

667 BCE

642 BCE

617 BCE

Tullus Hostilius passes away

With a reign that sees Rome's borders expand like never before, the warlike Tullus Hostilius dies. His reign is likened to that of Romulus.

642 BCE



Anicus Marcius passes away

The fourth legendary king of the Romans, who helped reaffirm Numa Pompilius' work on Rome's religious infrastructure, dies.

617 BCE

Numa Pompilius is elected king

With the interregnum now over, the Senate swears Sabine noble Numa Pompilius in as king. According to Roman historian Plutarch, Pompilius was born on the day of Rome's founding.

715 BCE

Numa Pompilius passes away

Following a reign that saw many of Rome's religious institutions founded, including many of its temples, Pompilius dies.

673 BCE



Curiate Assembly elects Ancus Marcius

642 BCE

As with many kings who ruled in the Regal era, an interim period takes place between Hostilius and his successor. In between the election of the new king, an interrex is established (meaning a regent of sorts is appointed to look after the kingdom). The Senate selects suitable candidates before the people of Rome vote for who they want to rule them. The legislative group that appoints the new leader, Ancus Marcius, is known as the Curiate Assembly.



Byzantium would eventually go from being of little consequence to Rome to becoming its capital

Byzantium is founded

667 BCE

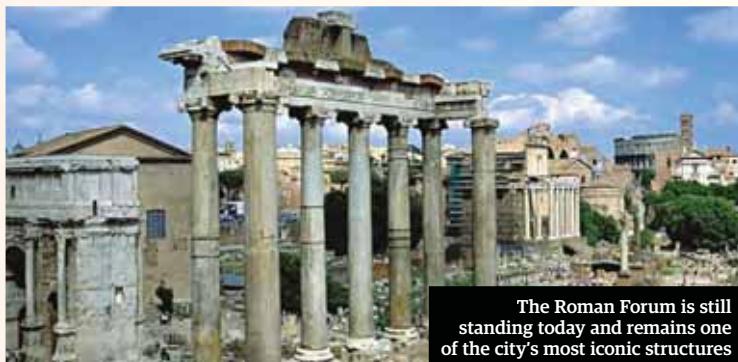
Around 667 BCE, the first roots of Byzantium are sown; a nation that will go on to be a foe, and an eventual conqueror of Rome. According to legend, the city was founded by Byzas, who sailed from a city-state near Athens called Megara. With its position at the only entrance to the Black Sea, Byzantium would grow into a powerful nation fuelled by its steady trade.

The Curiate Assembly was a collection of ordinary citizens who were gathered together by Roman law to vote on the worthiness of the new king

The Forum's central building is constructed

600 BCE

Perhaps the most important structure in Rome's history, the Forum becomes the home of the Senate and many of the state's important legislative decisions. It is under Lucius Tarquinius Priscus' reign that construction on the Forum is finished. Each of the previous kings had made some pilgrimage in this area, from draining it of water to the building of simple temples. Priscus' contribution is to have the main rectangular building constructed and the entire plaza paved. The Forum becomes a symbol of Rome's democratic heartbeat. More contributions will be made to it over the course of history.



The Roman Forum is still standing today and remains one of the city's most iconic structures

The Roman monarchy is overthrown

509 BCE

The rape of Lucretia by the king's son provides the spark to ignite the political powder keg that has been filling for years. The people and the Senate have grown increasingly uncomfortable with the actions of the king, Lucius Tarquinius Superbus, and his tyrannical rule. His obsession with architecture and building has largely exhausted the royal coffers and his foolish choice of military campaigns (based more on elevating his status rather than bettering the kingdom) leads the people to riot, resulting in his exile and the abolition of the monarchy itself.



The overthrow of the monarchy leads to the formation of the Republic

Oldest Latin inscriptions

The very earliest examples of written Latin date back to around this time. It's possible that this is when the Romans began actively recording their laws.

600 BCE

The Cloaca Maxima is built

Under the direction of Priscus, the first true Roman sewer is built beneath the centre of Rome. More primitive versions had been attempted, but this is the first true version.

578 BCE

Tullius builds city walls

In the first example of a Roman leader actively working to protect the city from foes, Tullius begins constructing walled defences around Rome.

550 BCE

616 BCE

600 BCE

579 BCE

578 BCE

575 BCE

550 BCE

535 BCE

509 BCE

Lucius Tarquinius Priscus is elected

The fifth king of the Regal era, once again elected by the people, is found in the ambitious politician Lucius Tarquinius Priscus.

616 BCE

Servius Tullius becomes king

Following a period of time as regent, the Senate determines him a suitable candidate and elects him as the sixth king (and the second of Etruscan descent).

579 BCE

Superbus' son rapes a patrician

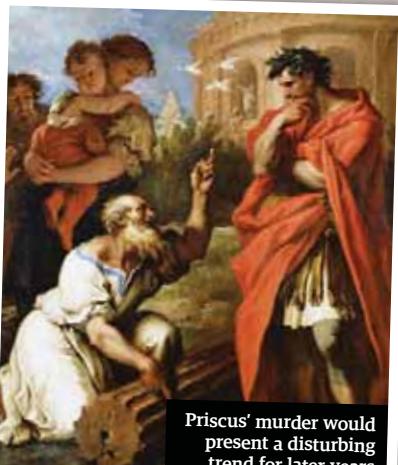
With Superbus already a deeply unpopular king known for his tyrannical rule, the news that his son Sextus has raped the patrician Lucretia is the final act that sends the kingdom into turmoil.

509 BCE

Priscus dies in a riot

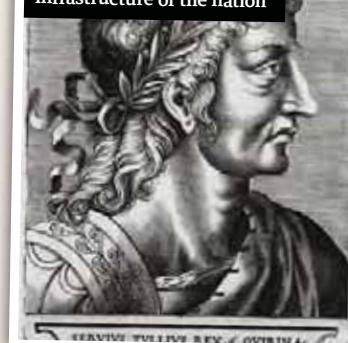
579 BCE

In the first example of a Roman leader being murdered, Lucius Tarquinius Priscus dies during a riot organised by the son of the previous leader, Ancus Marcius. According to legend, the sons of Ancus Marcius believe the throne should have passed to them so they organise a riot among the people and strike Priscus over the head in the chaos. It's said Priscus' wife finds her husband wounded but not dead, and uses the time to name the Etruscan Servius Tullius as regent.



Priscus' murder would present a disturbing trend for later years

Servius Tullius' set the financial and military infrastructure of the nation



Servius Tullius is assassinated

535 BCE

In another example of a disturbing trend in Roman succession, the king Servius Tullius is assassinated after 44 years of rule by his own daughter Tullia and her husband Tarquinius Superbus. Tullius had been a popular king, orchestrating a number of reforms. Superbus convinces the Senate to elect him king regardless and he becomes the seventh (and final) king of Rome, beginning one of the least popular reigns.

THE LAST KING

The outrages of the royal Tarquins sparked a revolt that led



OF ROME

to the fall of the monarchy and the birth of a republic

Words Marc DeSantis



THE FALL OF LUCIUS TARQUINIUS SUPERBUS



In the Roman monarchy, an institution founded in 753 BCE by Romulus, the first king of Rome, would last until the end of the 6th century BCE, well over two centuries later. Its dissolution came about as a result of a terrible crime committed by Sextus Tarquinius, the son of what would prove to be Rome's final king, Lucius Tarquinius Superbus. The king's surname was a fitting appellation - Superbus means 'the Arrogant' or 'the Proud'.

Superbus, a man of Etruscan origin, had become the seventh king of Rome in 534 BCE by killing the previous occupant of the throne, Servius Tullius. That Superbus' own wife Tullia was the daughter of Tullius did not prevent his coup. He then eliminated the senators who had supported the old king. The rest of the Senate was largely sidelined and ignored by Superbus, even though it had long been an esteemed advisory body to the monarchy. His opponents were either fined, exiled or executed on spurious charges in cases decided by the king himself. Taking advantage of his position, he exploited the people, building a magnificent temple to Jupiter, the king of the gods, using public money and forced labour. Hostility to his tyranny spread.

In 509 BCE, the Romans were at war with the nearby city of Ardea. Unable to take Ardea in a swift strike, they had settled in for a siege. With little to do while they waited out the trapped Ardeans, the king's sons and their companions passed much of their free time feasting and roistering in camp. On one such occasion, Sextus hosted Lucius Tarquinius Collatinus. The men got to talking, while drinking heavily, about which one of them had the best wife. With much alcohol having been imbibed, the exchange grew fierce. Collatinus suggested that they settle the

matter by leaving the siege to pay a surprise visit to each man's wife and see with their own eyes which one was the best.

That night they found the wives of the princes were having a very good time, feasting with their companions. Going next to the town of Collatia, they found Collatinus' wife, Lucretia, at home in front of her spinning wheel, working quietly with her maids. Lucretia thereby proved that she was the most virtuous and dutiful of all the women. Unfortunately, Sextus Tarquinius had now seen the beautiful Lucretia and was overcome with lust for her.

The men returned to the siege camp at Ardea, but Sextus and a companion went in secret back to Collatia a few days later. He was admitted to the Collatinus house as a friend by the unsuspecting Lucretia so that he could spend the night indoors. Later, when the whole of the household was asleep, Sextus crept up to the slumbering Lucretia, sword drawn, and woke her. He threatened her, but she would not agree to have sex with him.

Sextus next threatened to kill her and a male slave too. He said he would put the naked body of the dead slave next to her own corpse, to make it look as if she had been caught in bed with him and killed while committing adultery. This last threat, a threat to her honour, overcame Lucretia's determination, and she submitted to Sextus.

Later, after Sextus had left her, and aghast at what had happened, she sent messages to her father, Spurius Lucretius, in Rome, and to her husband Collatinus, who was still at the siege of Ardea. Both men were told to come to Collatia and that each should bring a trustworthy friend with him.

They arrived at Collatinus and Lucretia's home in Collatia, with Spurius Lucretius bringing Publius Valerius Publicola and Collatinus coming with Lucius Junius Brutus. Finding Lucretia utterly distraught in her bedchamber, she told them all that had occurred between her and Sextus. To prove her innocence, she pledged there and then to take her own life. First, however, she made the four all swear to punish Sextus Tarquinius. The men tried to persuade her that she was not at fault for Sextus' crime, but she took out a knife that she had kept hidden within her clothing and plunged it deep into her chest.

Drawing out the blood-drenched knife from Lucretia's body, Brutus, the king's own nephew, swore that he would drive King Lucius Tarquinius Superbus (Sextus' father) from Rome, along with the rest of the Tarquin family. Giving the weapon to the others, each man in turn swore the same oath.

Lucretia's body was laid in the forum of Collatia so that all could see what Sextus had done to the innocent woman. More men joined the cause against the Tarquins because of

Queen Tullia, the wife of Lucius Tarquinius Superbus and the daughter of Servius Tullius, runs her wagon over the body of her slain father

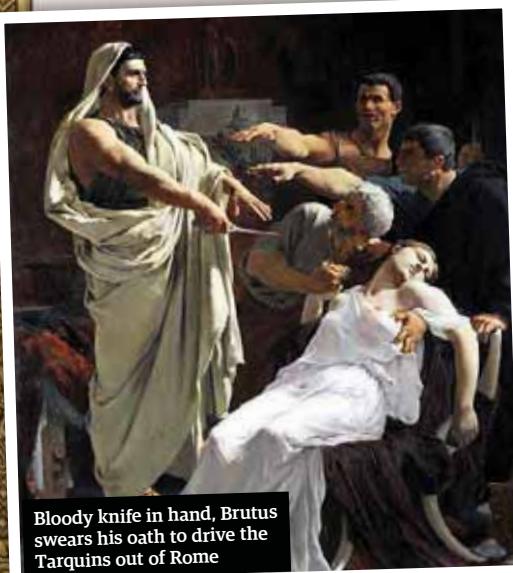


"Lucretia's body was laid in the forum so that all could see what Sextus had done to the innocent woman"

the vile crime. They left Collatia together and marched to Rome.

The people of Rome were shocked at the rape and death of Lucretia. Going before the people in Rome's forum, Brutus spoke against the king, reminding his listeners of his murder of the previous king, Servius Tullius; of how Superbus's wife, Tullia, despite being Tullius' own daughter, had ridden her wagon over her father's body; of their own forced labour in Rome's sewers; and of the rape of Lucretia. The enraged crowd decided to revoke Superbus' royal power and demanded that he, his wife and children go into exile.

The bulk of Rome's power lay in its army, and much of that was besieging Ardea. The soldiers would be needed to enforce the expulsion and defend Rome against the Tarquins, and so Brutus went to Ardea to turn it against Superbus. Queen Tullia, meanwhile, abandoned her home



Bloody knife in hand, Brutus swears his oath to drive the Tarquins out of Rome



to the accompaniment of curses hurled at her by incensed Romans.

Word of the events at Rome reached Superbus at Ardea and he sped back to the city to suppress the revolt, but Rome's gates were closed to him. Simultaneously, Brutus reached Ardea, where he was given a hero's welcome by the soldiers. Superbus' sons were thrown out of the siege camp, with two, Titus and Arruns, going into exile in the Etruscan city of Caere, while Sextus Tarquinius went instead to Gabii. His stay there was short and unhappy. He was soon slain by inhabitants who wanted their revenge for his abuses of the town's citizenry while his father had reigned at Rome.

THE BIRTH OF THE ROMAN REPUBLIC

Back in Rome, a Republic was declared, and two consuls - officials whose combined, equal authority would replace that of the expelled king - were elected. Lucius Junius Brutus would serve that first year of their annual appointment with his colleague, Lucius Tarquinius Collatinus.

Brutus did all that he could to ensure that the time of the kings would never return. He made the Romans swear that they would never again tolerate a king ruling over them. He also restored the Senate to its old membership of 300 men, a number from which it had fallen under Superbus.

Ironically, some Romans objected to the continued presence of the consul Lucius

THE ROMAN HOPLITE ARMY

The Roman army of the time of the kings fought in a phalanx formation

Though the Romans are famed for their legionary army of swordsmen, the military in the late regal period and early years of the republic was actually composed primarily of spear-armed hoplites, as was the case in the armies of contemporary Greek states of the 6th century BCE. Livy assures us that the soldiers of Rome fought in a phalanx. In Greek practice, the phalanx was a formation of hoplite warriors armed with spears and shields arrayed several lines deep.

Livy also tells us that it was Rome's penultimate king, Servius Tullius, who instituted the system of military recruitment based upon wealth. Then, as now, military equipment tended to be rather expensive, so he conducted a census of the Roman people to discover who could afford what for service in the army. After the census was completed, the Romans were divided into five classes, from the First Class, the wealthiest, to the Fifth Class, the poorest.

The First Class men were expected to appear for army service with the most complete panoply. This included a round bronze shield, a bronze helmet, a pair of bronze greaves, and a bronze breastplate. Their weaponry consisted of a long spear and a sword.

The men of the Second Class were to provide themselves with an oblong shield (instead of a round one), a bronze helmet and greaves, a long spear, and a sword. Breastplates were not required of them.

The Third Class men were to serve with the same gear as those of the Second, but their equipment list omitted the greaves. The Fourth Class men showed up for service only with one long spear and a javelin. The Fifth Class men, with minimal resources, were to fight as light skirmish troops and were armed only with slings and ammunition.

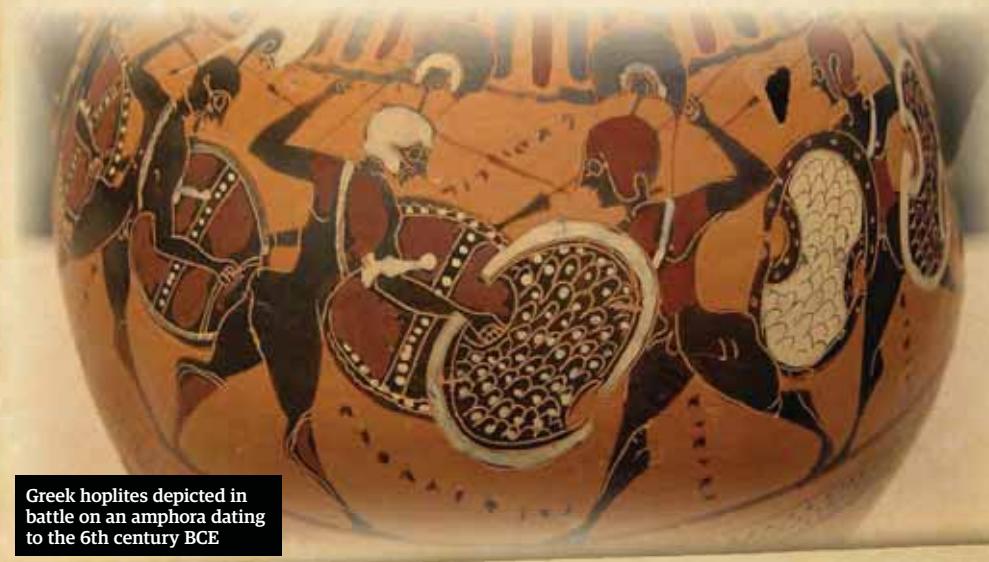
From the foregoing, it would seem that only the First Class men were armed and armoured as 'true'

hoplites as history has come to understand the term. Our notions of how an ancient hoplite phalanx fought are largely derived from the Greek histories of the wars with the Persians (490-479 BCE), the Peloponnesian War of 431-404 BCE, and later conflicts. Further, in the Greek world of the Classical era, missile-hurling soldiers had no place inside the phalanx proper.

So how might a Roman hoplite army have fought? Sadly, our information on this matter is not solid. It is possible that only the First Class men fought in the phalanx battleline. It may also have been the case that the Second, Third and Fourth Class men fought on the flanks of the First Class men while the Fifth Class men fought as skirmishers.

Another possibility is that the Roman phalanx of the late Regal Period/Early Republic displayed certain 'old-fashioned' characteristics that became outmoded among the Greeks of later centuries, whose practices are better-known to us. The Roman phalanx may have done battle in a manner more in keeping with that of the archaic Greek phalanx that prevailed prior to the great wars of the Classical Hellenic world in the 5th century BCE, with the archaic Greek battle array being a formation in which the missile-throwing troops still had a place in the battleline, fighting beside the heavier hoplites.

In such a case, Rome's Fifth Class slingers, and its Fourth Class men too, who bore a long spear and also a javelin, may have stood with their better-equipped comrades in the battleline. It also stands to reason that, if these lighter missile-casting troops could have occupied places in the line, then the heavier Second and Third Class men, whose gear approximated – if did not altogether equal – that of fully equipped hoplites, may also have fought in the phalanx, together with the First Class men.



Greek hoplites depicted in battle on an amphora dating to the 6th century BCE



The bodies of Brutus' sons, executed on his own order following their attempt to overthrow the republic, are brought to him



Tarquinius Collatinus because he too was a Tarquin (a nephew of the fifth king). Brutus advised Collatinus to leave Rome with the assurance that all of his current property would remain his. Collatinus was bewildered by this development, and rightfully so since it was unjust. He had played a leading role in overthrowing the Tarquins, and Brutus, as the king's nephew, was even closer to the royal line. He was blameless in all that had happened. Why must he leave?

Nonetheless, sensing the mood of the Roman people, and listening also to the pleas of his father-in-law, Spurius Lucretius, Collatinus resigned the consulship and left Rome for the city of Lavinia. He was replaced as consul by Publius Valerius Publicola, who had been one of the four men (along with Collatinus, Brutus and Spurius) who had begun the revolt against King Tarquinius Superbus.

COUNTER-REVOLUTION

Although the Tarquins were gone, there were still supporters of the old regime left within Rome's walls. The city would suffer an abortive insurrection by disaffected young nobles. Having lived a dissolute life in the company of the last king's sons, they favoured a return of the monarchy, an institution of governance that they believed would be more congenial to them than that of the dour, law-beholden republic. Conspiring with envoys from the Tarquins who had come to Rome for the ostensible purpose of retrieving royal property, they were found out when a slave who'd heard them plotting came forward to reveal their secret.

Caught with an incriminating letter passing between them and the Tarquins' envoys, the men were sentenced to death and beheaded by the lictors, axe-wielding officials tasked by the republic with the enforcement of the deadly

pronouncements of the consuls. These executions were made all the more startling by the presence of two of Brutus' own sons among the condemned men. They suffered the same fate as the other conspirators while their father, struggling to maintain his composure, watched the lictors perform their stern duty.

THE TARQUINS STRIKE BACK

Lucius Tarquinius Superbus was infuriated by the unravelling of his scheme. He next rallied military support against the newborn republic from the Etruscan cities of Veii and Tarquinii. Marching against Rome, their forces were met at Silva Arsia by a Roman army under the command of the consuls Brutus and Publius Valerius Publicola.

Brutus engaged Superbus' son, Arruns Tarquinius, in single combat. Both men perished in the encounter, but the Romans had the victory in the battle. Publicola, who survived the engagement, held a magnificent funeral for Brutus, Rome's fallen liberator.

Reeling from the defeat, in 508 BCE Superbus went to the Etruscan city of Clusium, where he enlisted the support of his fellow Etruscan monarch, King Lars Porsena. Going against Rome, the Clusian army seized the Janiculum Hill and might even have carried the city in one fell swoop but for the courage of the Roman soldier Horatius Cocles. With just two companions, Horatius held the Sublilian Bridge over the Tiber River against the oncoming Etruscans until it could be pulled down.

Unable to take Rome by direct assault, Porsena laid siege. He was impressed by the bravery and patriotism of the Romans. One young Roman, Gaius Mucius Scaevola, tried to assassinate Porsena, failing only because he

mistook the wrong man for the Etruscan king. When questioned by Porsena, Scaevola's hand was forced into a fire, but he didn't cry out. He promised the king that there were 300 other young Romans who were prepared to try to assassinate him.

Porsena was taken aback, both by Scaevola's steely determination and the unwelcome notion that he would have to endure so many attempts on his life. Seeking a better resolution than unending strife, he soon made peace in exchange for the Romans giving him hostages.

THE BATTLE OF LAKE REGILLUS

Though Porsena had failed to restore the Tarquins, they did not give up on their dream of reinstatement in Rome. In 496 BCE, the Romans were at war with the Latin League. Though the Romans were Latins themselves, they and the other Latins were sometimes at odds, and as part of the First Latin War (c. 498–493 BCE), their armies met in battle at Lake Regillus.

With the Latins came Lucius Tarquinius Superbus. In a bid to regain his throne, the deposed king again made war on his former subjects alongside the Latin League army. The Romans were aware of his presence, and their detestation of him spurred them to enter battle immediately to get to grips with their opponents.

Horatius Cocles desperately defends the Sublilian Bridge against the invading Etruscans while other Romans tear it down



"In a bid to regain his throne, the deposed king again made war on his former subjects"

The battle was especially hard-fought. The generals of both armies took direct part in the combat, instead of hanging back to direct their troops more easily. Superbus is said to have spurred his horse forward to charge at Aulus Postumius Albus, the Roman dictator (the dictatorship was an office in which a single Roman official was temporarily granted vast, practically unchecked power to preserve the state in a time of military emergency), who was himself busy forming up his own troops for battle. Thundering over the field, Superbus was struck in his side by a Roman missile, but the Latins were able to pull him to safety.

Elsewhere on the battlefield, the Latin general Octavius Mamilius, Superbus' son-in-law, and Titus Aebutius Helva, Rome's Master of Horse (the Roman officer in charge of cavalry while Rome was commanded by a dictator), charged at one another like knights at a tournament. Mamilius' lance tore straight through Aebutius' arm, but Aebutius' own lance sank into Mamilius' chest.

Both men were pulled from the fight by their comrades. Aebutius had been so badly wounded

that he had to leave the field entirely. Mamilius, however, despite his chest wound, remained, exhorting the Latins on. When the Latins drew back from contact with the Romans, he sent in a unit of Roman exiles under the command of Superbus' last living son, Titus Tarquinius. Thundering into the fray, they managed to gain the upper hand, and the Romans on this part of the field were pushed back.

Marcus Valerius Volusus, the brother of Publicola (the man who had replaced Collatinus as consul alongside Brutus) saw Titus Tarquinius prancing on horseback in front of the Roman exiles and rashly charged ahead. Titus Tarquinius evaded the attack by simply retreating into friendly troops. Volusus drove his horse onward but was quickly brought down, impaled by a Latin spear.

With Volusus dead, the Roman exiles attacked and drove the Romans backward. Postumius, seeing them breaking, sent in his own elite cohort of troops to prevent them from running away. Sandwiched now between the enemy and the dictator's men, the Romans turned and

resumed fighting. Postumius' crack soldiers also joined the battle with them - they had, until then, been in reserve - and they battered the by-now weary exiles.

Mamilius gathered several maniples (small units of soldiers) to go to the rescue of the embattled exiles. He was identified by a Roman officer, Titus Herminius Aquilinus (notably one of the two courageous warriors who'd stood with Horatius Cocles on the Sublilian Bridge back in 508 BCE), because of his ornate armour. Herminius charged Mamilius and drove his spear into the enemy general, killing him. Herminius was himself injured by a spear thrust as he attempted to strip Mamilius' corpse of its arms and armour. Mortally wounded, Herminius was brought back to the Roman camp where he died shortly thereafter as his wounds were being dressed.

To bolster his army, Postumius had his cavalrymen dismount and take places in the main battle line beside the Roman infantrymen. Thus reinforced, the Romans renewed their attack, drove the Latins from the field and captured their camp.

The defeat at Lake Regillus was Superbus' last attempt to retake his throne. He would die soon after, in 495 BCE, in the Italian-Greek city of Cumae, where he had found refuge after the battle. The time of the kings of Rome had finally come to a bloody end. The time of the republic had only just begun.

HORATIUS HOLDS THE BRIDGE

The venerated Roman hero Horatius Cocles prevented the Etruscans from crossing the Tiber and storming Rome

Following the expulsion of Tarquinius Superbus, Lars Porsena, the Etruscan king of Clusium with whom Superbus had sought refuge, moved to restore his fellow Etruscan to the Roman throne. In 508 BCE he marched on Rome with his army, occupied the Janiculum Hill, and in a bid to carry the city with a quick assault, sent his troops across the single bridge (the Sublilian Bridge) over the Tiber.

The Roman soldiers on guard at the wooden pile bridge would have all taken to their heels but for the resolute courage of one man: Horatius Cocles. Horatius turned soldier after soldier around, warning them that if they did not return to their posts and hold the bridge the enemy would soon be inside Rome itself. He told the other men to demolish the bridge and while they did he would hold off the Clusians on his own.

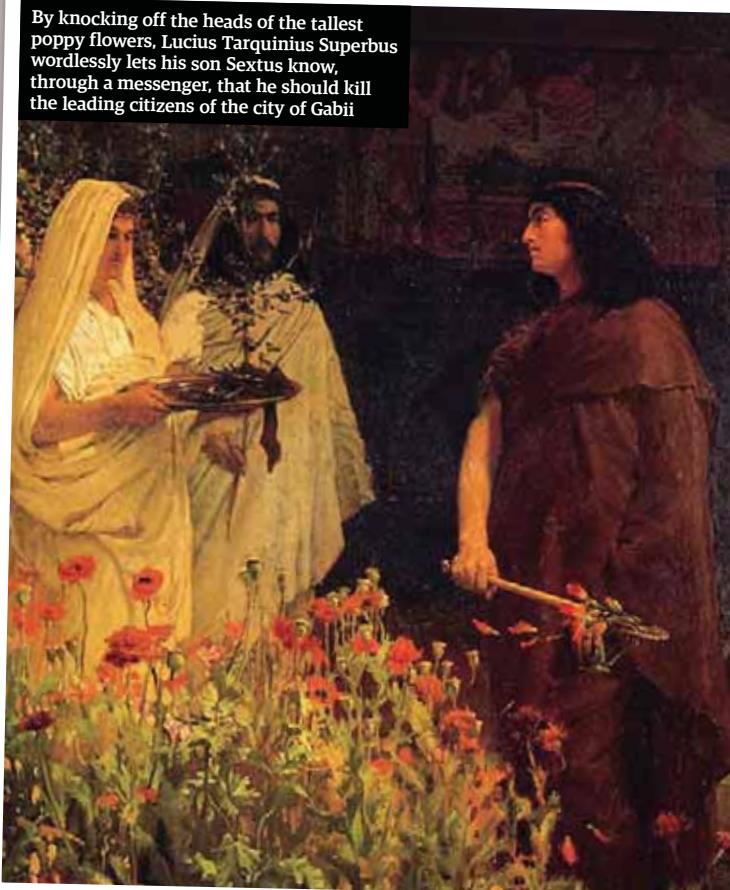
Walking onto the bridge, the stalwart Horatius faced off against the advancing enemy with just two companions, Spurius Larius and Titus Herminius Aquilinus, by his

side, while the rest of the soldiers busied themselves with dismantling the bridge. The trio withstood the Etruscan onslaught until only the last portion of the bridge remained to be taken down.

Horatius told his comrades to retreat. Alone now on the bridge, he glared at the Etruscans and challenged them to do battle with him. They came at Horatius, throwing spears that embedded themselves in his shield. Horatius would not budge. He held off his attackers until the final portion of the bridge was brought crashing down, severing the route over the river.

His task finished, Horatius uttered a prayer to 'Father Tiber' and plunged into the water below. Though still clad in his heavy armour, he managed to swim to safety despite the heavy burden. This was a feat, Livy slyly notes, that later Romans would see as more commendable than it was believable. For this brave deed, his fellow Romans honoured Horatius with a statue erected in the Comitium and a generous grant of land.

By knocking off the heads of the tallest poppy flowers, Lucius Tarquinius Superbus wordlessly lets his son Sextus know, through a messenger, that he should kill the leading citizens of the city of Gabii



THE ROMAN REPUBLIC 509 - 27 BCE

Roman Republic established

509 BCE

Following the overthrow of the monarchy and the exile of Lucius Tarquinius Superbus, the Senate establishes a new republic. In this new form, two leaders will rule cooperatively as consuls, elected for a single year each. With the formation of the Roman Republic, new powers are granted to the Senate and to the Plebeian Council, giving the people more power and influence over the laws that govern their home. It is decreed that Rome will never again recognise a king of Rome and subsequently elects Lucius Junius Brutus and Lucius Tarquinius Collatinus as its first joint consuls.



Lucius Junius Brutus is on the left, shown between his lictors, a type of bodyguard to magistrates

Battle of Silva Arsia

Republican forces meet those loyal to the deposed and exiled king at the Battle of Silva Arsia. Superbus' forces are defeated, but Lucius Junius Brutus is killed in battle.

509 BCE

Plebeian Council given new powers

As further evidence of Rome's growing sense of democracy, the Plebeian Council (formerly known as the Curiate Assembly) is granted the power to help make Roman laws.

449 BCE

Roman soldiers earn a wage

For the first time in the history of Rome, soldiers are finally granted and paid a standing wage. This is due to the wealth brought in by the army's growing list of conquests and new lands.

396 BCE

509 BCE

501 BCE

449 BCE

445 BCE

443 BCE

396 BCE

390 BCE

337 BCE

293 BCE

Marriage between patricians and plebeians legalised

In another move created to foster the growing sense of equality between the high-ranking patricians and the normal plebeians, marriage between the two is legalised.

445 BCE

Three consular tribunes established

The office of the Tribuni militum consulari potestate is established. It's a set of three councils who will hold the power of the consuls in order to settle a power struggle between plebeians and patricians.

443 BCE

First plebeian praetor elected

Despite the political struggles between the patricians and the plebeians, the very first plebeian praetor is elected into office.

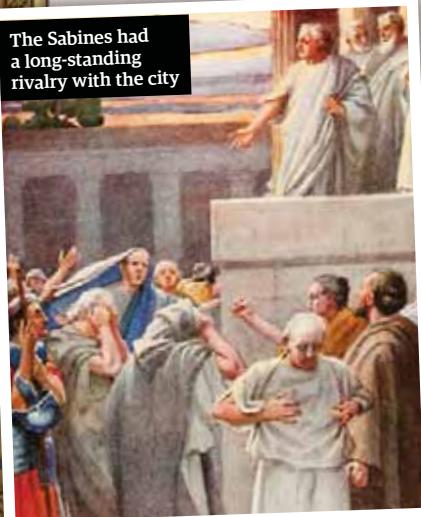
393 BCE

Roman census is conducted

In and around 293 BCE, the Office of the Censor conducts an official census that shows the population of Rome has swelled to around 300,000 people.

293 BCE

The Sabines had a long-standing rivalry with the city



Senate passes dictator law

501 BCE

Despite the realm's difficult past with a single man holding too much power, the Senate decides emergency laws are needed to grant temporary ultimate power to an individual in the event of a crisis. This is known as the senatus consultum. With the threat of a Sabine invasion looming, Titus Lartius and Postumus Cominius Auruncus select the former as dictator.



The loss was a substantial one for the Gauls with around 40,000 killed and another 10,000 taken as prisoners to be sold into slavery

Rome halts a Gallic invasion

225 BCE

The Battle of Telamon in 225 BCE halts a potentially disastrous Gallic invasion. Rome had formed a peace with a handful of the Gallic tribes to the north of Italy's borders, but a new alliance of Gauls seemingly ignore this and begin moving troops into northern Italy with their eye on Rome. Roman forces under the command of consuls Gaius Atilius Regulus and Lucius Aemilius Papus march to Telamon and defeat the Gauls, extending Roman influence.

Senones sack Rome

390 BCE

In 390 BCE, Rome suffers its worst domestic disaster as the Senones reach and sack the city. On what is believed to be 18 July, the Romans march to meet the forces of the Senones, a large Gallic tribe that has invaded northern Italy. Despite their usual successes against the barbarians, the Romans are almost completely routed, leaving the path to Rome open for the Senones. The Senones find a city largely undefended, and therefore proceed to murder many of its elders, burn buildings to the ground and loot everything they can. Eventually, a Roman general called Camillus arrives with a relief force and destroys the Senones.



The Romans almost have to bribe the Senones to leave at one point before the arrival of Camillus and his forces



Battle of Arausio

105 BCE

The Battle of Arausio represents one of Rome's worst military defeats, and marks a turning point in the relationship between consuls. It also leads to many important reforms. The battle begins when a large Gallic tribe, the Cimbri, start migrating through Gaul, which causes an imbalance in the hierarchy of the tribes. With the Cimbri now growing in number, two armies under the command of consul Quintus Servilius Caepio and consul Gnaeus Mallius Maximus arrive to meet them. However, tactical disagreements between the two leaders have disastrous results with over 100,000 Roman soldiers dying.



The defeat at Arausio was a wake-up call for Rome, and led to serious reforms

Caesar's death led to a civil war and the formation of the empire

Julius Caesar is assassinated

44 BCE

In the build-up to his assassination, Julius Caesar had risen from consul and member of the First Triumvirate to the most powerful seat in the land. He was not, as is sometimes incorrectly assumed, an emperor, but a dictator who was voted into that position by the Senate in 49 BCE and then again in 45 BCE. The Senate passes a vote making him dictator perpetuo, a role that made many senators who had not voted in his favour fearful that Caesar would install himself as king. On the Ides of March, a conspiracy is put into motion that sees Caesar betrayed by his allies and stabbed to death in the Theatre of Pompey.

First Triumvirate formed

The First Triumvirate, an alliance between three of Rome's most powerful politicians (Julius Caesar, Pompey and Marcus Licinius Crassus) is formed.

59 BCE



Timeline: 225 BCE, 146 BCE, 121 BCE, 105 BCE, 91 BCE, 73 BCE, 59 BCE, 44 BCE, 30 BCE, 27 BCE

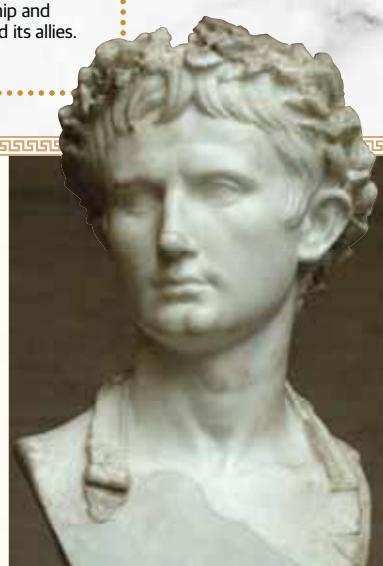


Spartacus' rebellion had an impact on master and slave for decades to come

Third Servile War begins

73 – 71 BCE

The third and final slave rebellion, which is led by Spartacus, is the only servile uprising to threaten the stability of Rome itself. A band of escaped gladiators begins swelling with slaves who wish to know true freedom. Under the leadership of slave and gladiator Spartacus, the loosely armed rebels defeat a number of Roman forces before Roman commander Marcus Licinius Crassus crushes the uprising.



The principate gave the illusion of a republican era, but in reality Augustus held almost all the power in the realm

Welcome to the empire

27 BCE

Following the death of his great-uncle Julius Caesar, Gaius Octavius, known as Octavian at this point, forms the Second Triumvirate with Mark Antony and Marcus Lepidus to find his assassins. The alliance causes a civil war. Lepidus is eventually driven into exile and Mark Antony commits suicide following his defeat at the Battle of Actium. Still granted the ultimate power of office by the Senate, Octavian begins creating a framework with the Senate, beginning the empire.

HOW THE ROMANS LIVED

All walks of life filled the streets of Ancient Rome, and for the poorer people of society the empire was very different to those at the top



Work hard, play hard. That appears to be the mantra by which a lot of Romans lived their lives. There's a general impression that the Romans were a wealthy, articulate bunch, who had splendid villas and clothes. However, that, in truth, is only half the story. As in any society, the normal men and women who lived and worked in Rome (Plebeians) led very different lives to those at the top of the tree (Patricians), residing in homes that were a world apart from the nobility and the elite and having differing levels of access to education and health provisions.

Today, most of the physical evidence of the lower class' existence has crumbled away. Their poorly built homes and unwritten stories have been lost to time. But historians have still been able to piece together the structure of Roman life: how they ate, what they wore, where they bathed and how they were schooled.

We also know that wealth was the key towards a good life, even for slaves who found they could amass money and sometimes buy their freedom.

"The normal men and women who lived and worked in Rome (Plebeians) led very different lives to those at the top of the tree (Patricians)"





CLASS ACT: HOW THE ROMANS WERE DIVIDED

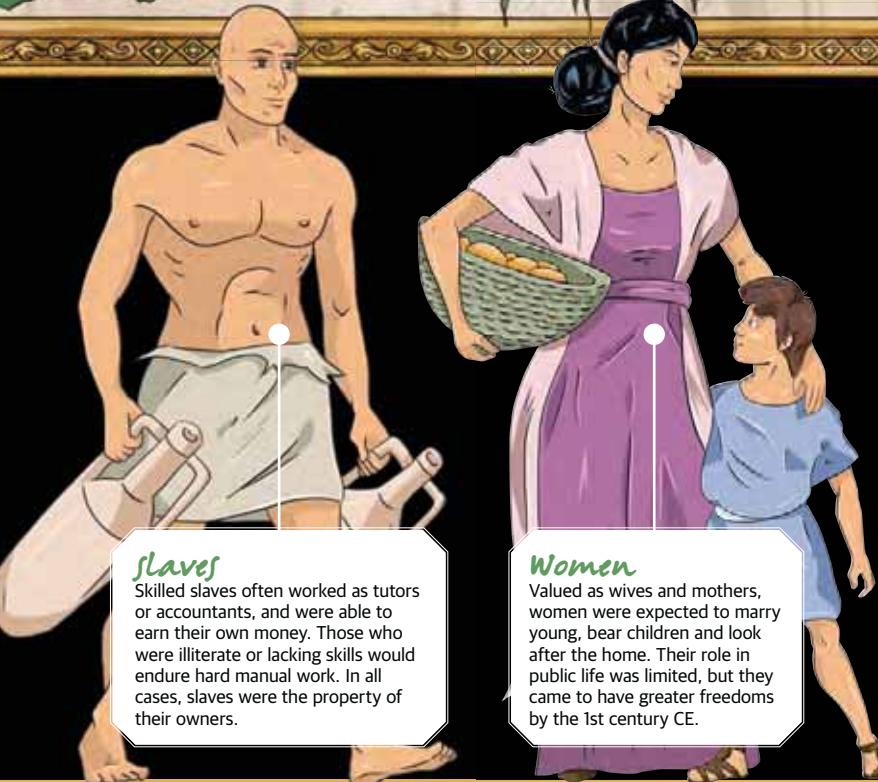
Roman society was a complex system made up of a strong social pecking order that went far beyond a simplistic dichotomy of very rich and incredibly poor. While we are familiar with the privileged lives of the emperors, senators and the equestrians below them, perhaps the most intriguing class of all was that of the plebeian.

The men and women of the lower classes were the beating heart of the empire but there were few comforts their work afforded them, and this didn't go unnoticed. A great dispute arose between the patricians and the plebeians in 494 BCE and it raged intermittently for 200 years. In that year, the plebeians threatened to leave Rome - a withdrawal of manpower that would have proved devastating - and concessions were

introduced. However, in the minds of the Romans there was still a difference in social standing, and the further down the chain you belonged, the worse your life became.

Beneath the plebeians in the Roman class hierarchy were the freedmen and the slaves. The latter did not hold citizenship, while the former had either been granted their freedom or had purchased it for themselves.

Being a citizen afforded a Roman a relatively comfortable life and certain rights, making it possible to vote, own property, lawfully marry, make contracts, sue, and attain a lawyer in court to avoid torture or death for any crime except treason. However, women had a more limited citizenship in Ancient Rome.



Slaves

Skilled slaves often worked as tutors or accountants, and were able to earn their own money. Those who were illiterate or lacking skills would endure hard manual work. In all cases, slaves were the property of their owners.

Women

Valued as wives and mothers, women were expected to marry young, bear children and look after the home. Their role in public life was limited, but they came to have greater freedoms by the 1st century CE.

Life among the classes

In such a cut-throat city, how did the patricians, equestrians and plebeians navigate through Roman life?

If there was a social leveller in Rome, then it would be found in the public toilets, where 95 per cent of the million-strong population sat, chatted and did their foulest of business. Within the latrine walls, the Romans were at their most naked, with their tunics pulled up and squatting over the large holes cut in wood

or stone, and their privacy completely whipped away. They wiped their bottoms with water-soaked sponges attached to sticks, which they then discarded into the Roman sewer system.

Back out on the streets, however, life was very different. There the class system was very much in place. At the top end of the scale were the higher ranks of Romans: the emperor, senators - who wore tunics with broad stripes called laticlavi

- and an economic class of equestrians, who wore a tunic with narrow stripes called the angusti clavi. But further down, there were the ordinary people of Rome, wrapped in a long semicircle of woollen cloth called a toga, as well as the freedmen and the slaves. However, the freedmen often occupied roles in the Imperial Palace, and so could improve their social standing and gain quality clothing.

The Plebeians saw Rome as it really was, away from the ornate, marbled villas and the grand buildings enjoyed by the privileged. Their warts-and-all view was of the cramped apartments in which they lived, multiple people to a room, in crowded areas that would absorb ever greater numbers year after year. For them, Roman life was the narrow streets between the squalid high-rise garrets, the busy taverns and visiting the ground-floor shops (tabernae) to buy food and essentials.

These areas may have wafted with the smell of fresh bread and exotic foods, but there would also have been the unmistakable stench of sweat, blood and human waste. Rome was usually a rowdy city, with fighting in the public areas, rows among residents, evidence of domestic violence and the ever-present risk of fire. Any moments of bliss could be interrupted by the emptying of a chamber pot out of a window to the ground below, particularly in the roughest part of town (subura).

Rome certainly wasn't a city for the faint-hearted, and the governors and senators had a constant battle to quash plebeian revolts and disharmony to keep the peace. Providing a weekly ration of grain and entertainment seemed to satisfy the lower classes, and the organisers or benefactors of festivals were always held in high esteem.

Rome was seen as a ready-made job market for the poorer man, its streets perceived to be paved with gold as much as dirt and disease. The many building projects meant there was always a pressing need for labour, so plenty of people emigrated there looking to work.

After its founding, the city of Rome fast became a bustling multicultural metropolis, but it was impossible to build enough quality accommodation for everyone. The harsh living quarters were generally as good as it got for hundreds of thousands of people, and for that reason, they tended to live most of their life outside of their apartments. The whole of Rome became their home.

With so much time spent in the company of others, the plebeians were known for being sociable and rowdy. They were also mostly tolerant of different races and religions. Incomers were integrated into the city just as they had been from the moment Romulus and Remus founded Rome as a city of outsiders, inviting criminals and runaways to seek

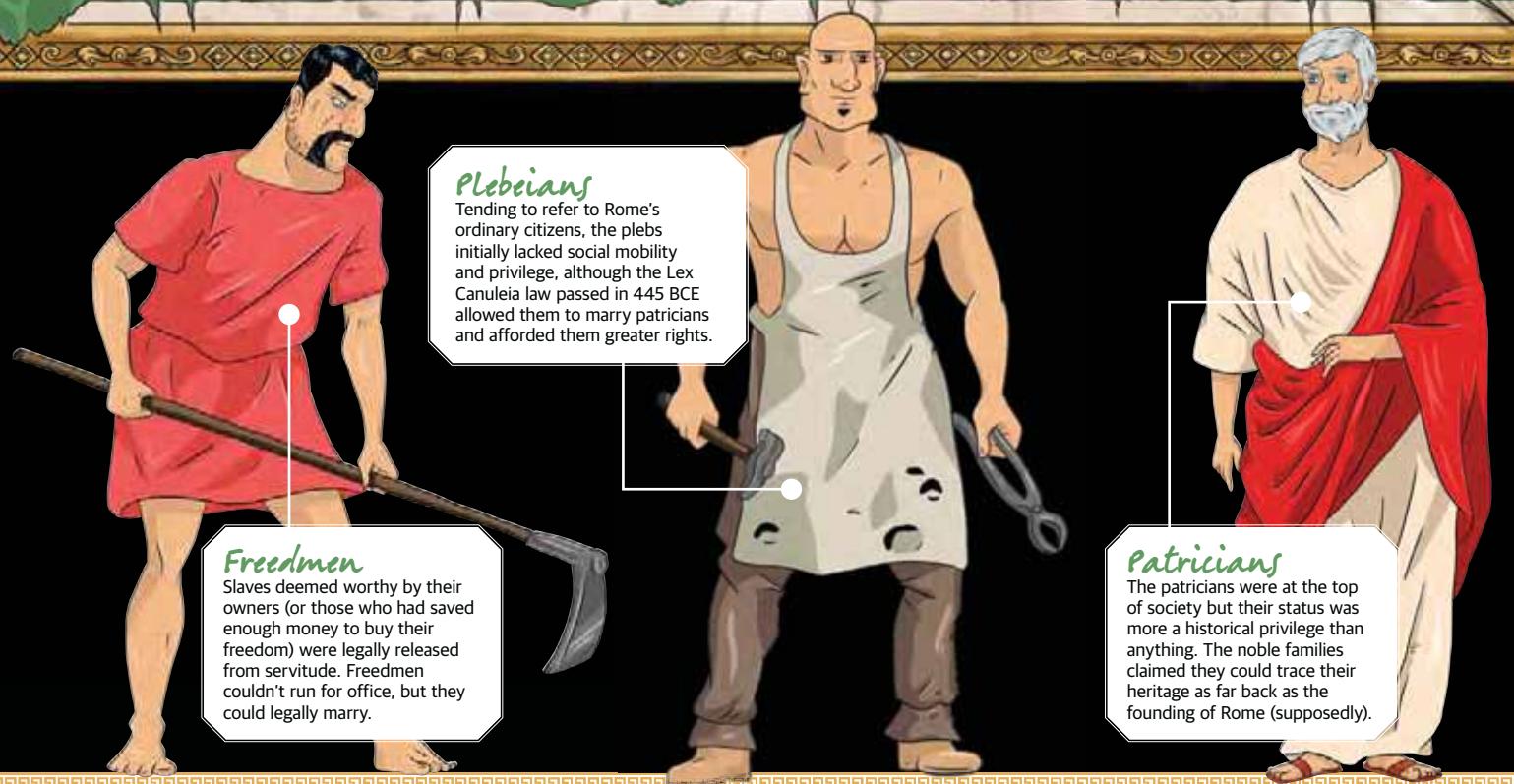
MARCUS TULLIUS CICERO

3 Jan 106 - 7 Dec 43 BCE



Brief Bio

Since a large factor in a Roman's 'nobility' was their ancestry, plebs who amassed money were still not considered patricians. The inability for Rome to shake off traditional divisions resulted in the creation of an equestrian class, acting as our equivalent of the middle class today. Cicero was an equestrian by birth, but he managed to become a senator through political connections and his notoriety as a great lawyer and orator. While his speeches and writing greatly influenced Roman politics, he could fall prone to snobbishness, once speaking of the sordida plebs - the great unwashed - a turn of phrase still common today. He was also an outspoken critic of Julius Caesar.



asylum. People quickly got involved in the busy Roman way of life.

Workers would rise early, toiling through the day for a small amount of money and seeking ways to supplement their income elsewhere. Children would also work, the boys serving apprenticeships and the girls carrying out domestic chores under the watchful eyes of their mothers or a domina (female master) - usually splendidly dressed in their stolas given shape by a belt called a zona. Schools were mainly fee-paying and were reserved for the rich and privileged. However, poorer families would look to educate their sons themselves, fathers teaching sons the tools of their trade.

Generations of the poor, therefore, grew up largely illiterate but skilled nonetheless. By the age of 14 (12 for girls), children would be married, their coming of age marked by a hearty banquet. Boys could be drafted into the military to help the Romans conquer and control far-flung lands, and girls were used to manoeuvre through social circles and join powerful families.

The soldiers also served another purpose: they were able to capture slaves and bring them back to Rome. Far from being chosen on racial grounds, slaves were generally taken instead for their strength, intelligence, practical skills or appearance. While some were used as labourers or turned into gladiators or other

figures of entertainment, they could also hold respectable positions in wealthy households. Rome's obsession with health and well-being, for example, saw an influx of Greek doctors entering as slaves after 47 BCE. As well as allowing Romans the benefits of better hospital treatment and the skill of surgeons, the Greeks also aided advances in medicine. In some ways, they were perhaps a little too enthusiastic - their willingness to experiment with patients to test their theories caused a deep suspicion.

Having said that, it was usually preferable to the expensive quacks whose methods were quite unorthodox.

Having treatment available was a benefit of Roman life across the classes; even the slaves much lower down the chain benefited to some degree. It also showed that being brought into Rome as a slave could actually be a good career move for the skilled. Many from the East, in particular, were intelligent and cultured, and were able to slot easily into society and contribute greatly. In fact, some Roman citizens with overwhelming debt would sell themselves into slavery. Some slaves were also allowed to earn and keep their own money, saving up to buy their freedom or expensive clothes. By the 1st century CE, more than half of Rome's population was made up of slaves and freedmen. At this time, the Senate proposed

but this was rejected because of the potential embarrassment of seeing half of Rome's population dressed in such a way.

Such was the lure of Rome that when a slave was afforded the status of a freedman, many would remain, becoming a Roman citizen and using their connections to their advantage. Some freedmen actually went on to hold important positions, such as Tiberius Claudius Narcissus, a close confidant of Emperor Claudius who almost succeeded in stopping Nero's succession to become ruler.

According to Roman legend, Romulus and his twin brother Remus were the offspring of Rhea Silver and the God, Mars



This wood engraving from c.377 CE shows a Thervinus selling himself as a slave for a dog to feed his family

Hearths, homes and hypocausts

The Romans brought with them new homes, landscapes and ways of living

Before the Roman conquest, Britain was formed of predominantly rural communities. The majority of people dwelled in roundhouses of mud, wattle and daub, timber and crowned with thatched roofs. These homes were unlikely to have separate rooms, so the space inside was more communal, especially the warming hearth in the centre. While there is evidence of rectangular buildings existing before the Romans' arrival, they were rare. Roundhouses continued to exist, in declining numbers, throughout the Roman rule of Britain – perhaps even 40 per cent of homes maintained this traditional design.

that were impossible in urban townhouses, and these vistas were highly prized.

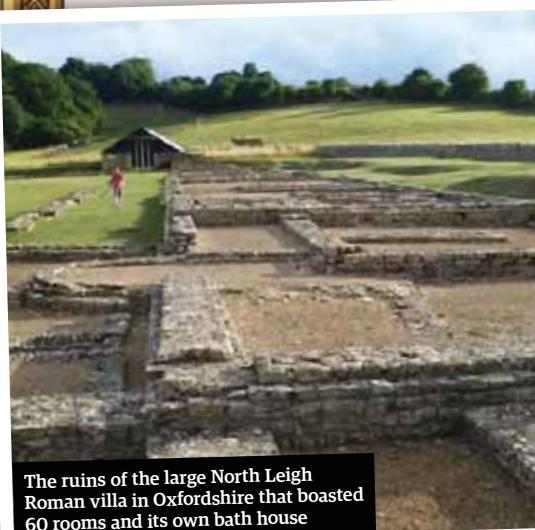
They were often built around a peristyled courtyard, and while symmetry was valued in Roman architecture, additional wings and outhouses were commonly added. A typical villa would be entered through a portico, or porch, flanked by columns, that would lead into a series of reception rooms, dining room, kitchen, library and bedrooms. The principal rooms would look out over gardens or a courtyard. The most lavishly decorated rooms, often featuring mosaic floors, would be found towards the rear

setting. Townhouses had a strong emphasis on hospitality, entertainment and greeting guests. They were built around what Dr Dominic Perring described as a "hierarchy of reception and movement": the portico would lead from the bustle of the street into a large reception rooms with views of the courtyard, then on to the more intimate and better-decorated rooms towards the rear, and possibly a dining room, where only the most privileged visitors would be admitted.

As noted by the Roman architect Vitruvius in *De architectura*, "Into those which are private no one enters, except invited; such are bed chambers, triclinia [dining room], baths, and others of a similar nature. The common rooms, on the contrary, are those entered by anyone, even unasked. Such are the vestibule [hall], the cavædium [courtyard], the peristyla [colonnade], and those which are for similar uses." The use of columns, arches, natural light and more luxurious decoration would have signalled the progress through the house.

Townhouses and villas were most likely single-storey, would have had walls of stone topped with timber or wattle and daub, with columns, a whitewashed exterior and ceramic or stone roof tiles. Windows would have been covered with wooden shutters, although glass windows were occasionally used.

But it was not only the elite whose homes were transformed by Roman influence. As urban centres grew, the need for rectangular housing became more apparent; round houses do not sit close together, whereas rectangular buildings can be placed compactly. In Britain, unlike in overcrowded cities like Rome and elsewhere in Italy, large, multi-storeyed housing in insula was unlikely to have been required. Urban housing was instead



The ruins of the large North Leigh Roman villa in Oxfordshire that boasted 60 rooms and its own bath house



An intricate mosaic of Medusa at a villa in Bignor, West Sussex. Mosaics were a luxurious, high-status addition to British architecture

The Romans, particularly the elite, brought with them a culture that was both rural and urban, and the elite in particular needed a presence in both worlds: just as the growth of towns and urban life was a major part of Romanisation, so was the presence of villas dotted throughout the countryside.

Villa, which translates as 'farm', does not tell the full story. Far from simple farms, they were often country estates and could be key industrial centres or even countryside palaces of a sort, more about demonstrating power and prestige than working the land. Usually located within 15 kilometres of towns, they gave the elite access to both urban and rural worlds.

Villas were commonly surrounded by a mound and ditch, and they were positioned to face east, southeast or south – whichever direction would allow the principal rooms to receive the morning sun. They could offer views of countryside

of the building. Hypocausts, a form of underfloor heating, were extremely common in villas in Roman Britain. The grounds around them would likely possess a shrine, storage and bath houses.

In town, townhouses were the urban abodes of the elite. They shared many similarities to villas in terms of style and decoration, although they were often more focused on being private due to the compact urban



A recreation of a Roman villa urbana, the more luxurious and urban style of villa, near Wroxeter, built using traditional techniques for the TV series *Rome Wasn't Built in a Day*

FOOD FOR THE MASSES

While the rich indulged their taste buds with an array of mouth-watering foods, brought to them by slaves, the diet of the poor was rather more bland. Most were unable to enjoy the sauces, expensive meats and imported spices that the aristocrats digested, so made do with cheaper alternatives.

The poor would rely on the staples of cereal, olive oil and wine, and supplement it with bread, lentils, vegetables and porridge. Flat, round loaves made by cereal grain called 'emmer' were popular, but later bread made from wheat was introduced. Women would also

grind grain into flour in thrusting mills, although there is evidence of animal-driven mills attached to bakeries such as in Pompeii and Ostia.

Farmers, hunters and fishermen had better diets, and thanks to no religious restrictions, anything could be consumed. Cured pork was popular, while beef was much less common.

Roman citizens would eat their meals three times a day. They would have breakfast (*jentaculum*) in the morning, lunch (*prandium*) at roughly midday, and dinner (*cena*) in the evening. This would be the main meal and

the highlight of many days. A lot of effort went into producing the best dinner possible with the resources that were available.

Dinner parties were a popular affair for the patricians, and infamously, they would recline on couches in order to relax as they ate and savoured each mouthful. Stuffed dormouse was a particular delicacy enjoyed by the rich, sprinkled with honey and poppy seeds. Due to the lack of cutlery, the Romans would eat with their hands, so the food had to be conveniently presented. At dinner parties it was considered impolite to eat with your left hand.



single-storey, made of wattle and daub or timber. These include 'strip' buildings - long, rectangular buildings with shops or workshops in the front and homes in the rear. They would have had small windows with wooden shutters and iron grilles covering them. More conventional hearths would have provided the much-needed warmth in these lower-status abodes.

It was not unheard of that these more humble homes would include reception rooms, although it was noted that the lower classes had less need for these by Vitruvius: "For a person of middling condition in life, magnificent vestibules [entrance hall] are not necessary, nor tablinum [tablet storage], nor atria [courtyard], because persons of that description are those who seek favours which are granted by the higher ranks."

With the eventual breakdown of Roman rule in Britain, urban houses and countryside villas alike were gradually abandoned and fell into disrepair and ruin.

Customers gather in a thermopolium, or cook-shop - a place similar to a fast food restaurant that served hot meals to the poorer people of Rome





Caesar, his rise to power and his assassination within the Senate, was one of many factors that led to the Senate's eventual loss of power

BIRTH OF THE SENATE



From its humblest beginnings to its clashes with the many Roman Emperors of history, the Senate was the resolute voice of the people



or over 1,000 years, the Romans reigned as one of the most powerful nation states in history. It was a time of incredible military might and expanding

borders, where the eagle sigil was raised across the known world to signal a new era of colonial expansion. But it wasn't just abroad that the Romans made their mark - in the Senate, Rome had its own unique form of governance. A parliament of learned men where every member had the right to express their thoughts in debate, where the laws of the land were made and the future of the nation decided.

Rather fittingly for an institution so synonymous with Rome itself, the Senate is believed to have been established around the same time King Romulus created the Roman Kingdom in 753 BCE. Romulus chose Rome as his seat of power and with it he created a new state office that would take care of the dull, repetitive reality of legislation and general political infrastructure. This was, in its very earliest form, the beginnings of the Senate, and even here, in Rome's youngest days, the basic elements that would define it were already being formed.

Rather than selecting ordinary citizens (or plebeians, as they were known), representatives were instead selected from the most influential families from around the region. Romulus originally selected 100 members, but that number soon swelled to a regular figure of 300 as more individuals of note were added. These individuals were 'patres', or patriarchs, the most important male in a noble clan, or gens. These

patriarchs, and the Senate itself, didn't have the power they would reflect in later centuries (it was very much an advisory council to the monarchy at this stage), but it was still a platform for the people to be represented to the ears of the king.

The Senate of the Roman Kingdom served three main purposes in the years prior to the formation of the Republic. Firstly, it served in an advisory capacity to the monarch. Secondly, it functioned as a legislative body for the people of the kingdom, and finally, it existed as the ultimate repository of executive power. The king could, by all means, ignore the counsel offered by the Senate, but as the years passed, the prestige of the Senate grew and it became increasingly difficult for a monarch to simply discard the word of such an important office. It was the beginning of a tumultuous pattern that would follow the Senate through history, both to its advantage and its error...

Part of the Senate's influence, especially among the people, finds its source in the deeply patriarchal nature of Roman society at this time. The elders of the realm were held in the highest regard and this created a considerable seat of power. Even the crown was subservient to the will of the Senate in some regards - for instance, a new king (selected by the people and Senate) could only ascend to the throne with the prior approval of the Senate. In the interim, all executive power would reside within the Senate, making it the most powerful seat in the land.

A total of seven kings ruled over the course of the Roman Kingdom, and it would be the seventh that would change the realm, and the

crown's relationship with the Senate, forever. Lucius Tarquinius Superbus - or Tarquin the Proud, as he's been sometimes called - was your typical tyrant. A man who murdered his way to power and abused its potency at every turn. He was warring constantly, and coupled with an obsession with building new structures, his exploits were squeezing the kingdom's coffers dry. His own people eventually ousted him when news that his son, Sextus Tarquinius, had raped a noblewoman. The act was used as a means to oust the royal family, with the nobility, the people and the army all supporting the king's exile.

After the abolition of the monarchy in 509 BCE, the Senate's position as an advisory council continued. Its size swelled to between 300 and 500 members, with each one being a patrician that would serve on the Senate for life. The republic no longer wished to be victim to the will of a single man, so it was decided that the position of consul would be created - two consuls (elected for one year at a time by the people) would serve jointly. The consuls could also call the Senate at any time, but these executive powers were rarely abused in the republic's early years.

Over time, the consolidation of power in the Senate began to grow. The consuls were in charge of leading the armies and serving as the face of the republic, but the Senate was largely in charge of running everything else in the realm. It dealt with finance, creating and amending laws, overseeing trials of those that broke the law and debated the topics and grievances of the people in a forum where any voice could be

TOP 5 FAMOUS SENATORS

It wasn't just the emperors who were the talk of the town - the Senate also produced some of Rome's most interesting characters

Marcus Agrippa

An unusual senator, Marcus Agrippa began life as a slave, working as a beautician. He flitted between a number of different roles, before pretending to be a man of higher rank (he was found out and banished). He was eventually called back, granted the same rights as a man who was born free and was elevated to senatorial rank.



Aulus Gabinius

A prominent figure in the twilight years of the republic, Aulus Gabinius was a statesman, a general and a supporter of Pompey. As well as a senator, he had a storied history in the army and was the general who successfully helped Mark Antony restore Egyptian pharaoh Ptolemy XII Auletes to his throne.



Tillius Cimber

Famously one of the men who betrayed and assassinated Julius Caesar, Tillius Cimber was initially one of Caesar's strongest supporters, but the political games he was playing with the Senate's power proved too much and so he served as the distraction that enabled Caesar's assassins to get the drop on him.



Cato the Younger

Cato the Younger - or Marcus Porcius Cato Uticensis, as he was also known - was a Roman senator famed for his stoic nature and iron-clad moral centre. He refused to accept bribes and was known as a great orator within the Senate. He is remembered as stubborn, tenacious, and a vocal sparring partner of Julius Caesar.



Marcus Licinius Crassus

A Roman statesman and general, Marcus Licinius Crassus was instrumental in the transition the Romans made from a republic to an empire. He's also rather famous for his incredible wealth. His death would go on to cause a rift between Caesar and Pompey.



heard. It was during this time we started to see plebeians entering the Senate - those who were not of noble stock - but it took a long time for the highest of ranks to be opened up to them.

The relationship between the Senate and the consuls also became more formal during the republic - when the Senate wished to pass its advice to the consuls, it would present an official decree known as a senatus consultum. Again, these were not orders, but they did hold weight and even the foolhardiest of consuls often heeded the counsel regardless. Especially so when these decrees concerned the popular Roman practice of warfare - a magistrate would have to justify any military action beyond the defence of an invading force to the Senate, which aimed to deter any warmongering consuls from seeking glory in needless battles.

Upholding the law of the land also layered the Senate with a cast-iron sense of morality regarding its own practices. For instance, a serving senator could not involve themselves in any form of banking or public contract and were forbidden from commissioning or possessing a ship large enough to be used in foreign commerce. In fact, a senator could not even leave Italy, such was the importance of their presence in Rome.

More interestingly, a senator was not paid. It was a factor linked with the wealthy, high-born origins of the Senate's earliest members. One was simply expected to be from a rich and monied background before entering the Senate,

and it was a factor that often put off plebeians who wanted to have a voice but didn't have the financial foundations to support themselves if successfully elected.

As such, the Senate required a position within itself in which to enforce the moral codes of its own members. So it was here, during the days of the republic, that we saw the creation of the censor. Censors were the political police of the Senate, and they were often some of the most well respected and most revered members of the forum - characters not averse to punishing their own for breaking the Senate's codes of conduct. Crimes often punished included corruption, abuse of capital punishment and the disregard of another member's rights. These were usually fines, but severe cases could lead to a member being impeached, which meant they were expelled outright from the Senate.

The creation of the censor also placed new rules on those applying to join the Senate. Those with prior criminal convictions or those that had previously fought as a gladiator and won their freedom were not often considered (mainly because neither background often left a man with much financial backing). In fact, by 123 BCE, the law Lex Acilia repetundarum was passed, making it illegal for any new prospective senator to have been convicted of a prior crime. These laws only became more numerous as the republic grew on, with public corruption forcing the Senate to be ever-more vigilant when conducting these screenings.

The role of the senator differed over the centuries, but the Senate was always in an advisory capacity to the king, consuls or emperor



When the Senate convened, it was usually conducted within the walls of the city (known collectively as the pomerium), and official rules stated that the Senate could not meet any further than one mile from the city's boundaries. Meetings outside the pomerium weren't common, but they did happen. Most of these were political in nature, including choosing to meet a new nation's emissary outside of the city in order to avoid revealing too much about Rome's internal defences.

In the last two centuries, however, the powerbase of the Senate began to transform. The relationship between the consuls and the Senate had degraded to a certain extent as the official state office began to assume more roles (and thus accumulate more collective power) than the magistrates themselves. The Senate could now veto any decision made by the consuls, which would see senators raise their concerns vocally or with a show of hands, a power that greatly troubled those who were in the position of a consul.

Over time, this saw the Senate evolve into an autonomous, self-governing entity that largely ignored the whim of the annual magistrates. During this period, the Senate grew to the

height of its republican power, and by 312 BCE, the power to select new consuls passed exclusively to the Senate. The reforms continued and in 81 BCE, general and senator Sulla successfully changed the law so the number of quaestors (the lowest rank of magistrate in the Senate) increased to 20, in addition to including all former quaestors back into the Senate by default.

Its position on foreign policy also changed during the final years of the republic. Initially loosely involved in such matters, the Senate eventually decreed that meetings with foreign dignitaries and decisions involving Rome's interest overseas must be dealt with by the Senate itself.

It was a sign of the office becoming more self-aware of its role within a larger machine, although the Senate still showed a sense of restraint. There was never an independent desire to acquire absolute power in the realm - for instance, the declaration of war and the ratification of treaties always remained with the people.

The power and influence of the Senate began to wane before the rise of the Roman Empire. The nation was beginning to splinter with internal conflict, including the issue of

WHAT WAS A DEBATE IN THE SENATE LIKE?



The Senate was designed to be the most democratic representation of Roman governance, so debates were long and took into account every member's thoughts on a particular matter. It would

begin by a presiding magistrate introducing a relatio (matter for discussion) and then opening the floor to debate. Every single senator would be called forward to express their opinions before their peers.

The order in which members were called forward was very specific and was based upon their role. The order was as follows: Consules designati, Princeps senatus, Dictatorii, Censores designati, Censorii, Consulares, Praetores designati, Praetorii, Aediles curules designati, Aedilicii curules, Aediles plebis, designati, Aedilicii plebis, Tribuni plebis designati, Tribunicii plebis, Quaestores designati, Quaestorii and Privati.

Once each senator had expressed their opinion on the relatio, the presiding magistrate had to express theirs (or risk a fine). Expressing an opinion, however long or short, was known as a sententia and was a vital part of the Senate's open floor of expression. A member could then respond to a sententia by vocalising their agreement or disagreement, or choose to sit next to them to show solidarity. It's not known just how much discretion a presiding magistrate would have to bring a debate to an end, but a meeting would need to be concluded before midnight.

The Roman Forum remained a vital part of the Senate's political process, serving as a platform on which the issues of the day could be heard

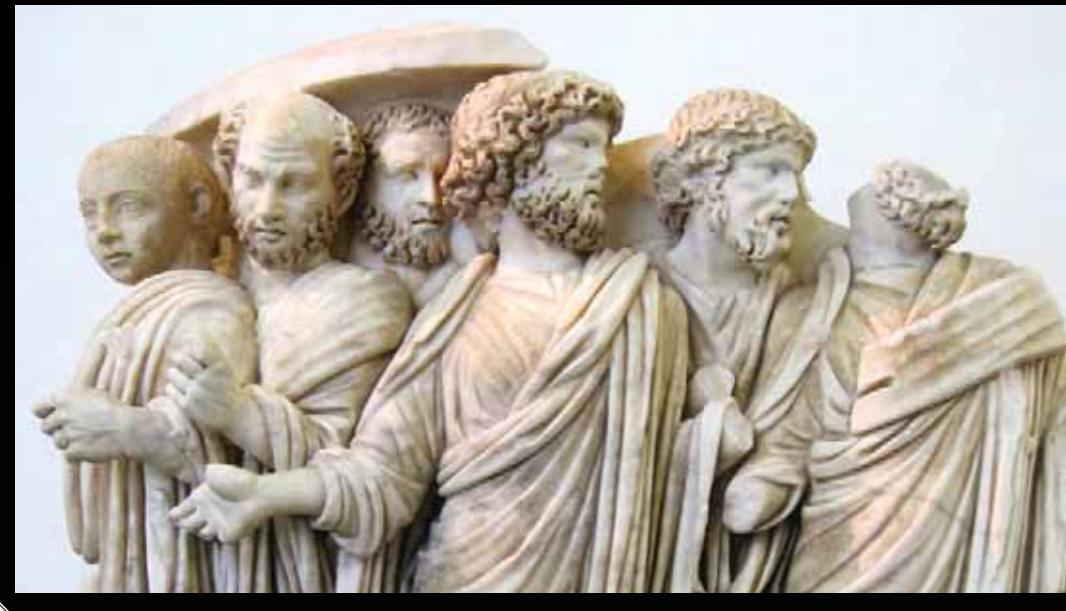




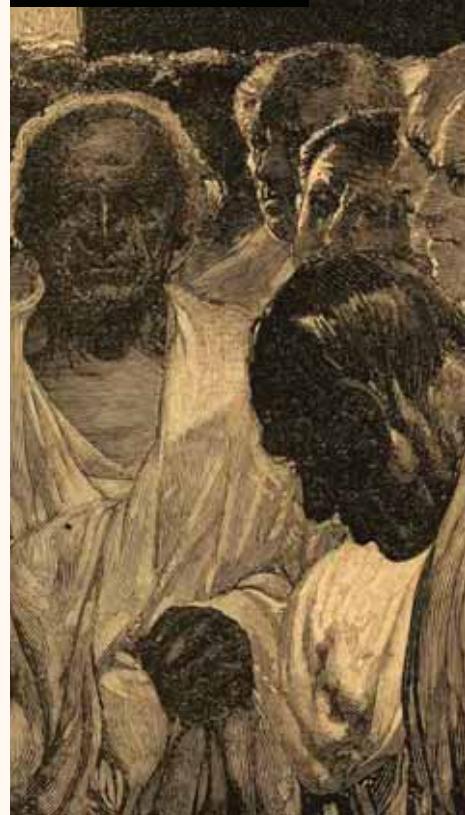
LIMITATIONS OF THE SENATE

The limitations in power endured by the Senate differed from the republic to the empire. During the republic, the Senate existed alongside the consuls – however, the consuls had far more power than the Senate and could effectively do what they wanted. This put the Senate at a disadvantage, but since consuls could only serve for two years at most while the Senate remained permanent, many consuls were often wary of the Senate's power.

Towards the end of the republic, the Senate's power exploded, but it was reduced rapidly under imperial rule. Its control of everything from finance to judicial laws was limited as the emperors continued to consolidate power into their own positions. The emperor enjoyed the privilege of calling and presiding over Senate meetings at will, picking members as he chose, and always being the first person to speak in a debate.



Censors such as Appius Claudius were the men who ensured the Senate itself abided by a strict code of moral conduct



TIMELINE

The Senate is founded

753 BCE

Alongside the formation of the Roman Kingdom itself, the Senate is also created. As befitting of its later incarnations, its members consist of high-ranking citizens from the most influential families who bring matters of discussion to the attention of the state. It's thought that King Romulus may have been the one who set the Senate up in the first place.

The first Senate consists of 100 members, each from influential families. Over time, this number doubles as the power of the Senate increases in the creation and maintenance of law and government.

753 BCE

494 BCE

341 BCE

121 BCE

27 BCE

68 CE

Tribune of the Plebs increased

The Tribunes of the Plebs, a Roman office of state that is open to plebeians (regular citizens), is increased in number by the Senate due to its popularity.

494 BCE

Senate agrees peace with Samnites

Following decades of war with the Samnites (a people who live in a stretch of the Apennine Mountains), the Senate agrees to an early treaty of friendship.

341 BCE

First Senatus consultum ultimum

The Senate passes the first Senatus consultum ultimum, which grants consul Lucius Opimius emergency powers to defeat the partisans of Gaius Gracchus.

121 BCE

Senate grants Augustus new titles

Augustus, the first emperor of the new Roman era, is granted a series of new national titles including Augustus, Majestic and Princeps.

27 BCE

Senate names Nero an enemy

68 CE

Nero proves to be one of Rome's most unpopular rulers and his decisions and policies not only alienate the people and the army, but even the Senate itself. The Great Fire of Rome in 64 CE is blamed on Nero as he seeks to build a grand palatial complex, the Domus Aurea, in the city centre.

When in hiding in 68 CE, Nero learns that the Senate has finally grown tired of his antics and has declared him an enemy of the state. He is ordered to be brought to the Forum and beaten to death. Instead, he commands his private secretary to kill him.





prominent army generals and politicians gaining independent followings that saw that attempt to curry favour with the Senate. The rise of the First Triumvirate (including the man that would beckon in the empire, Julius Caesar) also threatened the Senate's influence over the people, as did the three horrific uprisings (sometimes referred to as Servile Wars) that plagued the end of the republic.

By the time of Julius Caesar installing himself as dictator, and his subsequent assassination, the Senate was once again about to endure a significant transformation. The beginning of the empire proper with the formation of the principate saw the projected image of the emperor working in cooperation with the Senate to run the state - in reality, the emperor retained far more power than the consuls that preceded him ever had.

The Senate had swollen to around 900 by this point (a change brought in by Julius Caesar in order to fill it with his own supporters in the buildup to his own ascendancy), but this was reduced to 600 under Augustus. For a time it retained full control of the treasury, but Augustus (the first emperor of the principate) removed his power as more control was consolidated into the throne.

The emperor's power over the Senate during the Roman Empire was absolute. Now, an individual could gain entry into the Senate by

being granted the chance to be elected as a quaestor by the emperor, or granted automatic quaestorship and entry into the Senate by imperial decree. The Senate was simply at the beck and call of the emperor, and it only got worse from there.

The Senate was once again relegated to the role of advisory council, and it was a position that would only degrade following the anarchy of the Crisis of Third Century. The end of that chaotic period saw the rise of Tetrarchy, a four-person seat of emperorhood that led the empire to be carved into four sections. The main mind behind the Tetrarchy, Diocletian, even made a decree that gave the emperor the right to remove all executive power from the Senate without warning, further whittling down the Senate's influence.

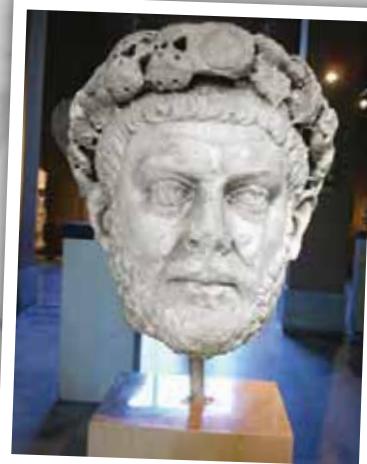
As the empire waned, the Senate endured, but it was a shell of its former self and ultimately petered out as the empire slowly fragmented and was conquered part by part. And yet, while it ultimately followed the empire itself into the grave, the Senate's impact on modern politics lives on to this day. The idea of a democratic forum where a man could air his opinion and veto a law he did not agree with lives on in many a parliament and senate, while the idea of civil law (where laws were codified alongside proportionate punishment) exists now as a basic fundamental of modern law.

"Diocletian made a decree that gave the emperor the right to remove all executive power from the Senate"

Diocletian dismantles Senate power

293 CE

In perhaps the most decisive reduction in Senate power since its creation, the first emperor of the Tetrarchy in 293 CE (an era where four leaders ruled the empire in four different sections), Diocletian, begins stripping away many of the office's official powers. He does this via a series of radical reforms, one of which states the emperors have the theoretical power to assume total control of the state from the Senate. The Senate retains the power to try treason cases and determine the order of appearance during a debate, but it is a shadow of its former self compared to the power it had once wielded at the heart of the empire.



117 CE	238 CE	275 CE	293 CE	325 CE	330 CE	552 CE
Hadrian recognised by the Senate As is the case with every single official emperor of the Roman Empire, the Senate officially recognises Hadrian as the next official ruler of Rome. 117 CE	Senate elects two rulers On 22 April 238 CE, the Senate elects two rulers to govern Rome (much like the old consuls of the Republic) in the form of senators Pupienus and Balbinus. 238 CE	Senate recognises Tacitus In September 275 CE, following the murder of Emperor Aurelian by the Praetorian Guard, the Senate recognises his successor, Tacitus. 275 CE		First Council of Nicaea The Senate finds its position ignored as Constantine convenes a meeting of bishops and officials to determine whether Jesus Christ held the same status as God Himself. 325 CE		Roman capital moved to Constantinople The Christian emperor Constantine the Great moves the capital of the empire to Byzantium, where he creates the city of Constantinople. 330 CE
						Senators executed following death of Totila After the fall of the Western Roman Empire, the Senate continues under the Eastern kings. However, a number of senators are murdered in retaliation for the death of Ostrogoth's King Totila. 552 CE

How to become a Roman Consul

Want to learn how to gain power and influence in Ancient Rome? Here's how to do it

INSIDE THE SENATE



Venue

Many locations were used for Senate meetings, such as the Temples of Jupiter Capitolinus, Fides, Concord and Apollo.

Open doors

Meetings were public. To highlight this, doors were left open during meetings, so anyone could observe them.

Audience

The Senate originally comprised 100 men but increased to around 300 at the height of the republic.

Tradition

One way to keep your opponents from the floor was to keep talking – a tactic employed several times by Cato the Younger.

Consul

As the consul would frequently address the Senate, he was expected to have a dominant presence and strong oratory style.

DUTIES OF THE CONSUL

Chief judge

This power was transferred to the praetors in 366 BCE, but consuls would still serve as judges in serious cases and whenever called upon.

Senate

Consuls were responsible for passing the laws of the Senate, as well as acting as ambassadors on behalf of it.

Military

Consuls were the commanders-in-chief of the vast and strong Roman army, which they governed with the assistance of military tribunes.

Governorship

After leaving office, each consul was assigned – at random – a province or area to govern for a term of anywhere between one and five years.

Veto

Each consul had the power to block his colleague's decree, in the process ensuring that important decisions were only made in unison.



It was the highest elected office in the days of the Roman Republic, and two consuls were elected at any one time, each serving a one-year term before being replaced. Their duties spanned a vast range of civil and military tasks, and from 367

BCE a plebeian (common) citizen could even stand for office. This kind of democracy wouldn't last, however, as the death of Julius Caesar and subsequent wars led to the establishment of the Roman Empire in 27 BCE. The consuls' powers were absorbed by that of the emperor, leaving them as mere figureheads.



1 GET EDUCATED

Roman consuls are expected to have the immense confidence and education necessary to be superb public orators. For this reason, find yourself a private tutor – known around these woods as a pedagogue – to make sure you have the basic reading skills to lay the foundations you need to learn the art of rhetoric.

2 MARRY INTO A WEALTHY FAMILY

If all else fails, attempt to increase your influence by marrying into it. In Rome, powerful and wealthy families often support each other in the form of alliances known as amicitia, which are generally made concrete in the form of arranged marriages. Being associated with a great family is a quick way to get some votes.



3 BE A SHOWMAN

The better you present yourself to the people, the higher your odds of becoming a consul. As Marcus Tullius Cicero himself says: "Surround yourself with large numbers of people from every class and rank... Make sure your campaign has plenty of ceremony, brilliance and entertainment for the people."



4 INTIMIDATE YOUR RIVALS

You mustn't be afraid to use less than savoury means in order to get what you want. This can include inciting riots or hiring heavies - gladiators are particularly effective options here - to beat people up. If you happen to be a general, even better; simply make use of your heavily armed troops to threaten disorder.



5 INDULGE IN BRIBERY

Bribery is common, especially in these waning days of the Roman Republic. Should you decide upon this as an option, be aware that it can take two forms: direct bribery (paying off officials with money in return for votes) or indirect (provision of free grain, entertainment and outdoor banquets).



6 BECOME A MOB FAVOURITE

A man who has the support of the mob is a powerful man indeed, and should help you in your quest to become a consul. Putting on a series of gladiatorial games - preferably with a host of exotic animals - is a safe method of getting the mob on your side and willing to support you.

HOW NOT TO SEIZE POWER

Lucius Sergius Catilina, more commonly known as Catiline, was a prospective consul whose attempts to seize power went horribly wrong. Having been forbidden to campaign for election as a consul at an earlier date due to facing charges of extortion (he was ultimately acquitted), he was later defeated in 64 BCE by Cicero. Angered by this, he planned to take power by force, gathering a number of followers by promising to cancel debts, as well as appealing to the wants and needs of the poor.

However, Cicero was constantly kept abreast of Catiline's actions, forcing him to flee Rome after denouncing him as a traitor. Catiline later tried to enter Gaul (France) with his army, but he was prevented from doing so by soldiers led by general Gaius Antonius Hybrida in 62 BCE at Pistoria, where he and the majority of his followers were killed.



(IN)FAMOUS CONSULS

Lucius Junius Brutus

509 BCE

The founder of the Roman Republic, he was one of the first consuls and is claimed to be an ancestor of Marcus Junius Brutus, one of Julius Caesar's assassins.



Julius Caesar

100-44 BCE

Caesar was consul on five separate occasions, before being murdered after declaring himself a dictator for life.



Mark Antony

83-30 BCE

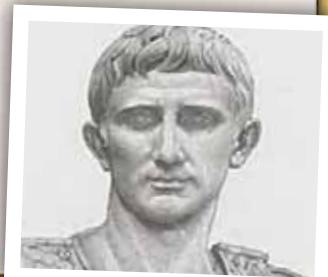
A consul on two occasions, he later ruled with Octavian before falling out, losing against him in battle and committing suicide with his lover, Cleopatra.



Augustus

63 BCE-14 CE

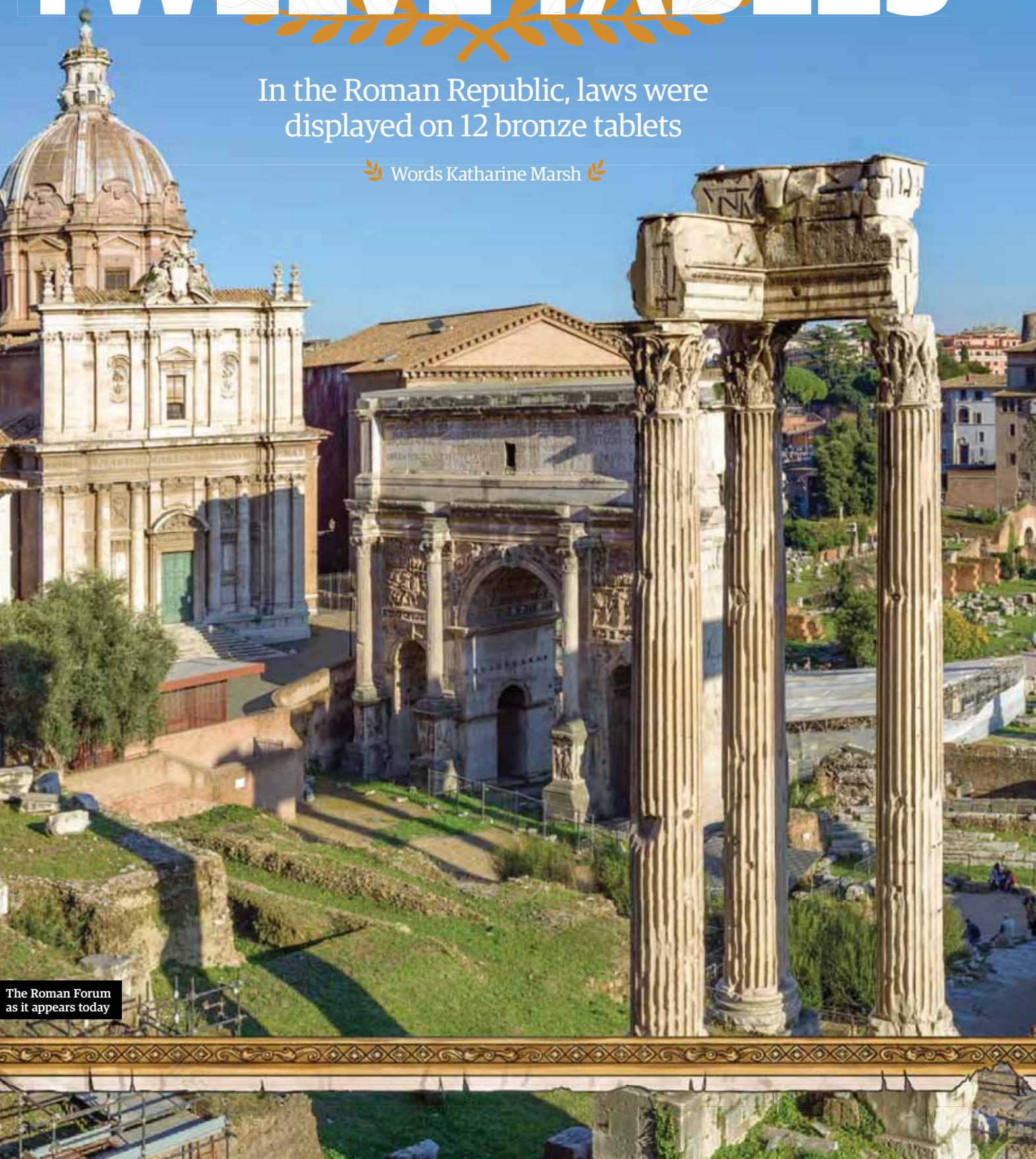
Formerly known as Octavian, he first became consul in 43 BCE, before becoming the first Roman emperor in 27 BCE.



THE TWELVE TABLES

In the Roman Republic, laws were displayed on 12 bronze tablets

Words Katharine Marsh



The Roman Forum
as it appears today



It was the 5th century BCE and the Romans needed a law code. It needed to ensure some amount of fairness for the ordinary people; the elite had their own council that could sway trials their way. The upper-class patricians had a history of gaining judgements in their favour. Naturally, the plebeians were angry.

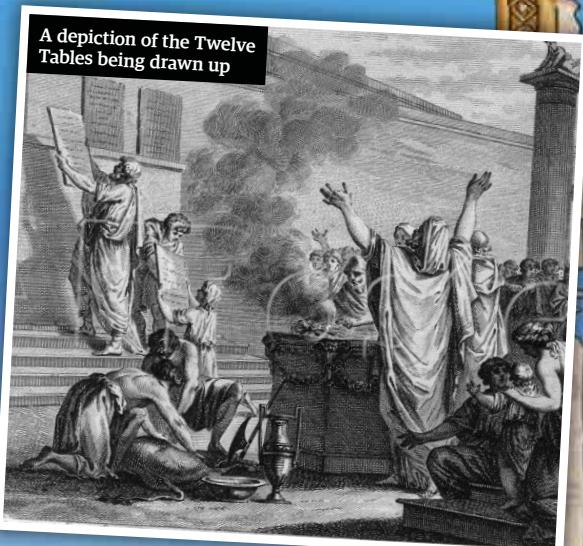
According to legend, three men were sent to Athens to study the laws of Solon, a famous lawgiver who had died a few years previously. In 451 BCE, a group of ten men - the decemviri - were appointed to draft the laws. They put forward ten tables to combat elite abuses of power, with a further two tables added later.

The tables were inscribed on bronze tablets and displayed in the Roman Forum alongside other important notices. The reason was simple: it was somewhere everyone could see them and

read them. The people could see their rights enshrined in bronze.

But the Twelve Tables weren't a liberal legal reform that gave the lower classes power in the Roman Republic. Instead, they laid out what was already known: that the patrician class had the power and people could be enslaved for unpaid debt. One thing they did introduce, however, was that religious leaders should have less power in civil cases.

The Twelve Tables would later move out of use as times changed, but they were never really abolished. In fact, their legacy can still be felt today.



EVERYTHING HAPPENS IN THE FORUM

The Roman Forum was one of the most important places in the city

If you head to any city today, you'll be able to find its hub - the place where the main shops are and where the legislative and judicial buildings find their home. That's not a new concept - in Ancient Rome, these areas were called forums (or *fora*). The city of Rome was home to perhaps the most famous of all: the Roman Forum, or *Forum Romanum*.

Situated between the Palatine and Capitoline hills, from its early days in the Roman Kingdom it was filled with shops and markets. As time went on, though, its use expanded to include public affairs from around 500 BCE. At one end stood the Curia, the meeting place of the Senate, until it burnt down in the late republic. The first temple was constructed around 498 BCE and was dedicated to Saturn, a god of agriculture. Temples were later built to Castor and Pollux, and to Vesta.

The Roman Forum was the main hive of activity in Rome. It was where people congregated or did their shopping, so it made sense for notices to be published there. In 304 BCE, a calendar was erected there so everyone could see what was happening in the city, and it was where the Twelve Tables had been displayed a couple of centuries earlier.

The Roman Forum was no stranger to politics. Assemblies took place there - or on the Campus Martius - and criminal trials were held there. Politicians gave public speeches, public meetings took place and religious ceremonies were held. It was the centre of the city's activity.



II

PROCEDURE FOR COURTS AND JUDGES AND FURTHER ENACTMENTS ON TRIALS

The first two tables outlined trial proceedings. Table I laid out what should happen leading up to a trial - for instance, defendants couldn't try to flee, and the court would provide a vehicle to bring defendants to court if they were too ill or old to make it there themselves. If either party failed to attend court, then after noon the judge would make judgement in favour of the party who was present. It also gave a time limit for trials - they would end at sunset. Table II went on to set out a limit on fines. "The penal sum in an action by solemn deposit shall be either 500 asses or 50 asses," it said.

III

EXECUTION OF JUDGEMENT

Table III told you how long you had to pay a fine after a trial. If it wasn't paid within 30 days, the guilty party would return to court, where the accuser could either discharge them or take them away. They would then be fastened "with not less than 15 pounds of weight or, if he choose, with more". The creditor had to give them a pound of grits to eat each day, or more at his discretion. Alternatively, the debtor could bring their own food. A compromise could be sought, or else the debtor would be held in bonds for 60 days. During that time, they would be brought to the magistrate on three successive market days, and the amount they owed declared publicly. On the third market day they either received capital punishment or were sold abroad.

IV

RIGHT OF FAMILIAL HEADS

The oldest living male in a household - the paterfamilias - was the head of the Roman family. He had all the authority, and Table IV laid out just what that entailed. He had the power of life and death over his sons and had to kill babies with severe physical deformities. If he wanted to leave his wife, he could order her to leave and manage her own affairs. However, if a father tried to sell his son three times then the son would earn his freedom from the father.

"The head of the family held the power of life and death over his sons"

V

GUARDIANSHIP, POSSESSIONS AND SACRED LAW

Women had very little power and the Twelve Tables confirmed it. Table V stated that all women, except Vestal Virgins, were under the guardianship of men - they belonged to their fathers and husbands. They couldn't inherit property, so a man's estate would go to a male relative. According to Table VI, a man and woman were considered married if they lived together continuously for a year. It wasn't just estates and guardianship that saw women's agencies ignored - women were possessions and their actions were regulated. Table X dictated rules surrounding funerals, including orders that the dead should not be buried within the city and that women couldn't make a scene or cry too loudly during a funeral.

VII

PROPERTY, LAND RIGHTS AND CRIMES

When it came to property, Table VII had all the answers. Disputed property boundaries would go through an arbitration process and trees leaning over boundaries could be removed by the neighbour. The tablet even dictated to whom fruit belonged if it fell from a tree onto a neighbour's property. Roads were a big part of what remains of Table VII. They were to be kept in good condition and people who lived near the road were in charge of maintaining it. It also specified that straight sections of road should be 2.5 metres (eight feet) wide, while bends should be five metres (16 feet) wide. Slaves were also considered to be property, so Table VII dictated the terms under which one might be set free in a will.

VIII

TORTS AND DELICTS (LAW OF INJURY)

If anyone sang or composed a song that insulted someone else, "he should be clubbed to death".

It seems like an incredibly harsh punishment today, but this was par for the course in Ancient Rome. Table VIII went on to say that patrons who defrauded their clients should be killed, and if you maimed someone, the same must be done to you. Lying during a trial wasn't an option, either - that

would see you flung from the Tarpeian Rock.

Stealing crops was punishable by hanging as a sacrifice to Ceres, a goddess of agriculture, although the punishment was lesser if the offender had not yet reached puberty. If someone attempted to steal during the night and was killed by the owner, the killing was deemed lawful.

IX

PUBLIC LAW

Treason has never been leniently punished, and that was certainly the case in Ancient Rome. According to Table IX - which mostly covers crimes against Rome - anyone found guilty of treason would suffer capital punishment. Similarly, judges and arbiters found guilty of receiving bribes in return for decisions were to be put to death. The table dictates that the punishment of a person must only be decided through the greatest assembly, or maximus comitatus. It also says, "He who shall have roused up a public enemy or handed over a citizen to a public enemy must suffer capital punishment" and that the "putting to death of any man who has not been convicted, whosoever he might be, is forbidden". The Romans weren't afraid to send people to their deaths, but they did want to make sure the penalty was dished out by the proper authorities.

X, XI

THE SUPPLEMENTS - MARRIAGE BETWEEN CLASSES AND BINDING INTO LAW

Drafted the year after the original laws, Tables XI and XII were added to supplement the legal code. Little remains from these, but from what we have we know that Table XI forbade marriages between plebeians and patricians. People were also not allowed to use controversial items for consecrated use, but the punishment for this is unknown as part of this fragment has sadly been lost to time.

Table XII covers the punishment slaves faced for thieving or damaging property, and also the terms of binding into law. It dictates: "Whatever the people ordain last shall be legally valid."



LIFE IN THE LEGION

Rome's ranks were filled with some of the best-trained soldiers in the world, forming one formidable force

 Words Tim Williamson 

R

oman armies were highly organised and supremely disciplined entities of war. Each legion numbered around 5,000 men, all trained and armed to defeat enemies from all across the vast Roman territories. The backbone of a legion was its legionaries, heavy infantry with sworn allegiance to the Senate and the people of Rome (Senatus Populusque Romanus), and later to the emperor.

However, the daily lives of these men weren't filled with glorious adventures fighting Rome's enemies but were instead governed by strict routine, endless hours of marching, and yet more hours spent training.

As a legionary, you would march, work, eat, fight and rest alongside the men of your contubernium, or squad. Each contubernium contained eight soldiers, with ten contubernia making up one centuria. At the end of each day's march, after constructing the legion's fortifications for the night, each squad would set up its own tent then enjoy some precious downtime. One servant was assigned to each squad, and they who would repair kit, cook, clean and carry out any general chores for the soldiers. At least one member of each squad would be assigned to guard duty throughout the night, before the camp rose at the crack of dawn and prepared to march once more.

TRAINING AND DRILLS

Officers trained their men mercilessly using techniques and combat styles developed by gladiators. Experience of the competitive and bloody contests in the arenas had made gladiator trainers experts in teaching fighters how to best their opponents.

New recruits practised with wooden swords and shields, which were heavier than the equipment they would be armed with in battle. This was intended to build up strength and stamina for the real fight. Practising on wooden stakes, recruits repeated drills to strike at the head, legs and torso, all while dodging and blocking as if their lives depended on it.



New recruits would have to master the pilum (javelin) and the gladius (sword), as well as battlefield formations



These re-enactors are playing the role of auxiliary cavalry, armed with spears and longer swords for cutting down the enemy

The next stage of training was the armatura, a sparring exercise that pitted two soldiers head to head. Wielding blunted or covered blades to avoid injury, soldiers attacked and parried one another using the same techniques learned fighting the wooden stakes. Legionaries trained in this way throughout their careers so as to maintain their skills. In fact, it was so important to the legions that buildings were constructed especially for this purpose, so practice could continue regardless of the weather. Those who underperformed during training were punished with a reduction in their rations, heavy fines, or even a rough beating from an officer.

Weakness or dissent in the ranks could mean the difference between victory and defeat on the battlefield, so strict discipline was often enforced through harsh punishments. Depending on the circumstances, crimes such as theft, desertion or even falling asleep on duty could be met with a whipping, demotion or even public execution - usually by being clubbed to death. In very rare circumstances where entire units ran away in the face of the enemy, the sentence of decimation was carried out - one in every ten of the accused would be executed. The fear of such a fate was usually enough to bolster the courage of any wavering squad or centuria.

BLOOD AND COIN

A regular wage was one of the key attractions for recruits, and legionaries were the highest-paid units in the army. Through promotion and time served, soldiers could hope to receive pay-and-a-half (sesquiplicarius), and veteran troops eventually could get double pay (duplicarius). While auxiliary recruits were generally paid a little less, they had the additional lure of being granted full Roman citizenship on completion of 25 years' military service.

Anyone looking to earn a little more could seek out both wealth and glory in war. In the aftermath of a battle, generals were known to reward particularly brave actions, or those who had received grisly wounds in the line of duty. After the Battle of Dyrrachium (48 BCE), for example, Julius Caesar was presented with a shield that had been pierced by over 100 arrows

A DAY IN ROME'S RANKS

Backbreaking work, relentless training and routine marches were just a few of the daily tasks facing legionaries



Washing

Soldiers were expected to maintain their own equipment but also their own personal hygiene during their limited free time each day. While barracks often had comfortable adjoining bath houses, when on campaign troops would wash with whatever resources they could find.



Training

Soldiers were expected to train daily, practising for real combat with wooden swords, slings, bows and javelins. Repeating tough battlefield drills prepared soldiers mentally and physically to face the enemy for real.



Martial punishment

Discipline was essential in the army, and breaking any rules could earn a severe sentence. Theft, desertion, disobeying orders and other crimes were often punishable by demotion, beatings, flogging or even public execution by clubbing.



Building fortifications

All soldiers would help construct a new temporary fortification at the end of each day's march, building trenches and wooden walls around the camp. This meant that no matter where the army travelled it could ensure some level of protection from enemy attacks at night.



Marching

An army would be regularly ordered to march up to nine hours per day, with each soldier carrying their equipment and rations, which could weigh up to 40 kilograms. Disciplined marching was often the first thing taught to new recruits.



- he rewarded its owner, a centurion, with riches and honourable promotion.

However, during campaigns some men found less honourable ways to gain wealth. After a successful conquest, generals would often allow their men to pillage and loot, enabling legionaries to fill their pockets with the spoils of war. In many extreme cases, generals used this as a way to secure the loyalty of the army and prevent possible mutinies in the ranks. Legionaries lucky to live long enough could receive a bonus of 12,000 sesterces (praemia) upon retiring or even be granted land to settle down, often within the same region in which they served.

DECLINE OF THE LEGIONS

Towards the middle of the 4th century CE, the Roman Empire was past the height of its power, and several fearsome tribes - Goths,

Vandals, Huns and others - began threatening its borders. Armies garrisoned at the furthest edges of imperial territory, such as in Britain, were marched back down the roads to defend Roman heartlands. By this period the legions had dramatically changed from the dominating forces of previous centuries.

Original height and age requirements were overlooked as recruiters struggled to fill the ranks to defend the empire. There was also little time for the strict training regimes of previous eras, and the wisdom of the armatura was all but forgotten. Without the allure of sharing in the riches of conquests, men were often forced into service. By this time, non-citizens were no longer prevented from becoming legionaries,

while Roman citizens were also as likely to join auxiliary units. This meant that Rome's armies were no longer filled with men from the regions close to Rome itself but from among so-called 'barbarian' territories conquered by the empire, some even from beyond its borders. Although these new legions did achieve some victories, they paled in comparison to the elite fighting forces they once were.

Tribunus Laticlavius

The second-in-command of the army was a senior tribune appointed by the Senate or the emperor and identified by a broad stripe in his uniform.

Structure of the army

Legions were highly organised fighting forces with rigid command structures

Praefectus castrorum

The third-most-senior officer in the army, the 'camp prefect' oversaw the maintenance of all arms, armour, fortifications and camp logistics.

KEY



Legionary Centurion Trumpeter



Praefectus castrorum Equites Aquilifer Legatus legionis



Tribunus angusticlavius Signifer Tribunus laticlavius Optio

Cohorts

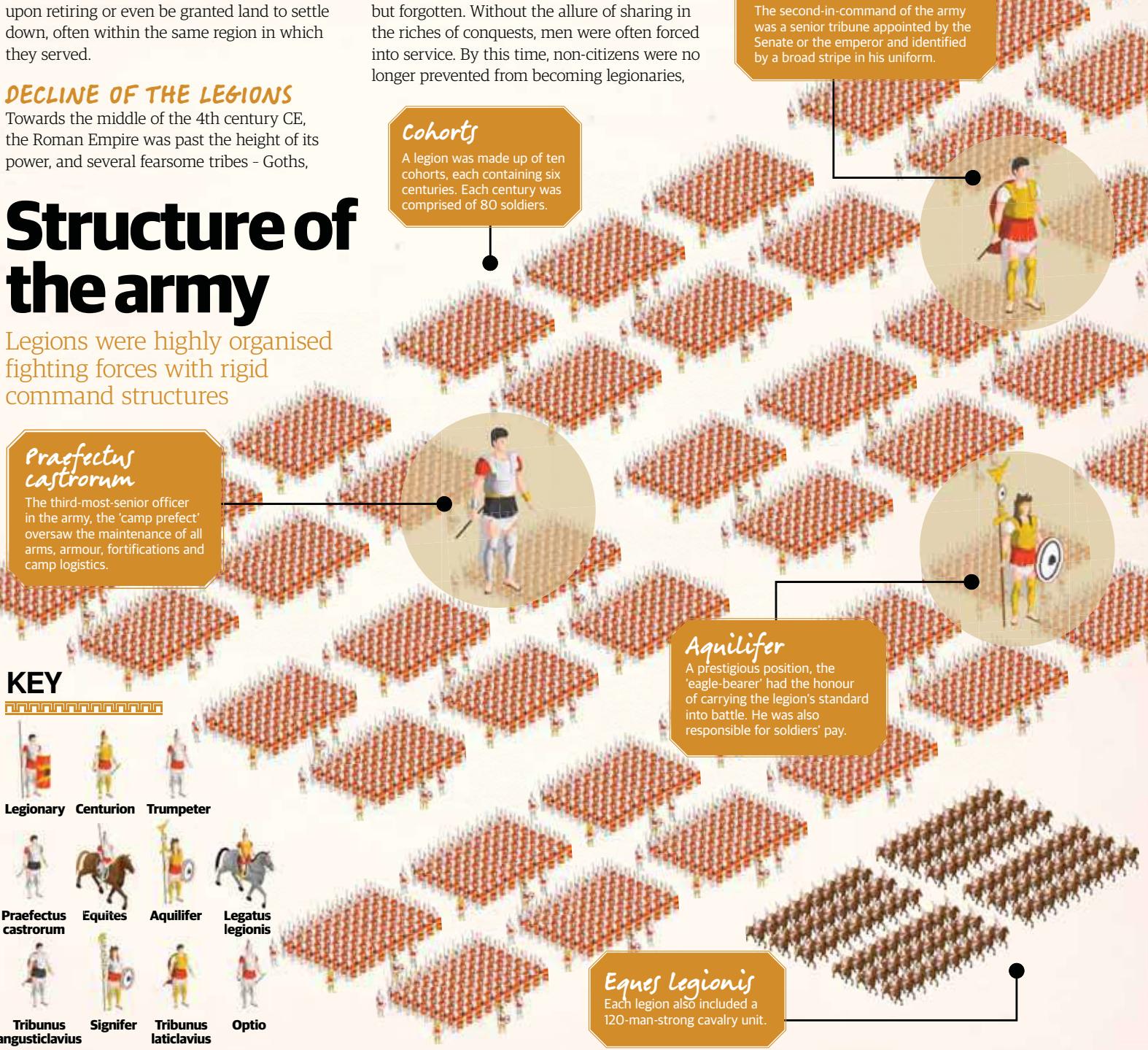
A legion was made up of ten cohorts, each containing six centuries. Each century was comprised of 80 soldiers.

Eques Legionis

Each legion also included a 120-man-strong cavalry unit.

Tribunus Laticlavius

The second-in-command of the army was a senior tribune appointed by the Senate or the emperor and identified by a broad stripe in his uniform.



AUXILIARIES

Although heavy infantry formed the backbone of Roman armies, specialist troops such as archers, slingers and cavalrymen were also crucial on the battlefield. These units were largely recruited from conquered territories, such as Gaul, Greece, Germania and Britain. Archers from Crete, for instance, were renowned for their skill with the bow, while German cavalrymen proved instrumental during Caesar's conquest of the Gauls in 58–50 BCE.

While auxiliary units were often raised and disbanded to meet the needs of a legion, the Romans became increasingly reliant on them. Unlike their legionary comrades, these men were not considered Roman citizens, but citizenship could be earned through lengthy service. As the empire began to decline, auxiliary and legionary units became almost indistinguishable. Eventually, non-citizens were widely recruited to help defend Roman territory.



A depiction of an auxiliary infantryman from Rome's imperial period

Centurion

The commander of a centuria, usually promoted through the ranks, would have many years' experience. The most senior centurion in each legion was called the primus pili, or 'first spear'.



Tribunus angusticlavii

Five tribunes, identified by a narrow stripe on their uniform, were responsible for the army's administration, but they occasionally led cohorts.



CENTURY STRUCTURE

Legionaries

Optio (assistant centurion)

Trumpeter

Signifer

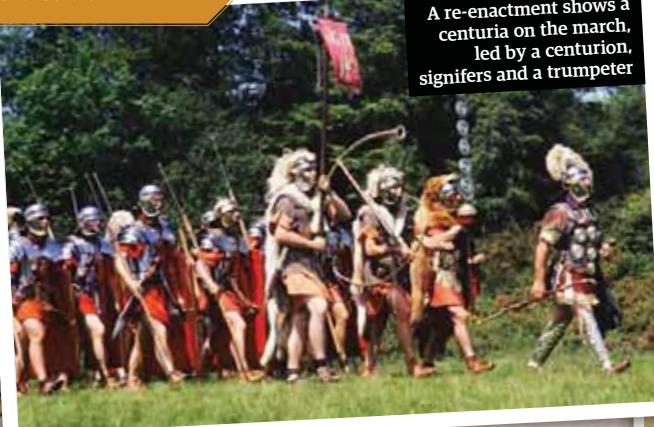
Centurion

Legatus legionis

The overall commander of the legion, the legionary legate was usually a former politician appointed directly by the emperor or Senate.



A re-enactment shows a centuria on the march, led by a centurion, signifers and a trumpeter



A Roman soldier often marched over 30 kilometres a day

ROMAN LEGION RECRUITMENT REQUIREMENTS

1 Citizenship

Only a citizen of Rome could become a legionary. Freed or current slaves were not permitted to join the ranks, although this rule was relaxed as the needs of the army changed.

2 Height

Recruits were expected to be a minimum height of 1.72 metres, though for some roles even taller men were required. Even so, it is thought that this rule was not always strictly followed by the military recruiters.

3 Age

Boys as young as 17 could join the ranks, and men generally aged anywhere up to their mid-20s would be accepted. In desperate times, this maximum age was extended to 35.

4 Education

Although the ordinary soldier did not need any education, those wishing to gain officer posts needed basic numeracy and literacy skills.

5 Strength

Most important was the recruit's health, stamina, eyesight and strength. Soldiers incapable of carrying out the highly physical tasks demanded of them were often discharged from the army.

BLOOD, GUTS & GLADIATORS



From enjoying beautiful poetry to cheering on a blood-thirsty gladiator going in for the kill, the Romans sure knew how to enjoy their free time



ntertainment and sport were central to Roman living with lots of pursuits, both literate and spectacular, keeping Rome's citizens busy during their free time. They were used by the emperor to control and occupy the poor, idle masses in a bid to head off any potential revolt, but the vast population would come to enjoy and embrace great and clear prose, elegant Latin poetry and art inspired by their neighbours, the Etruscans.

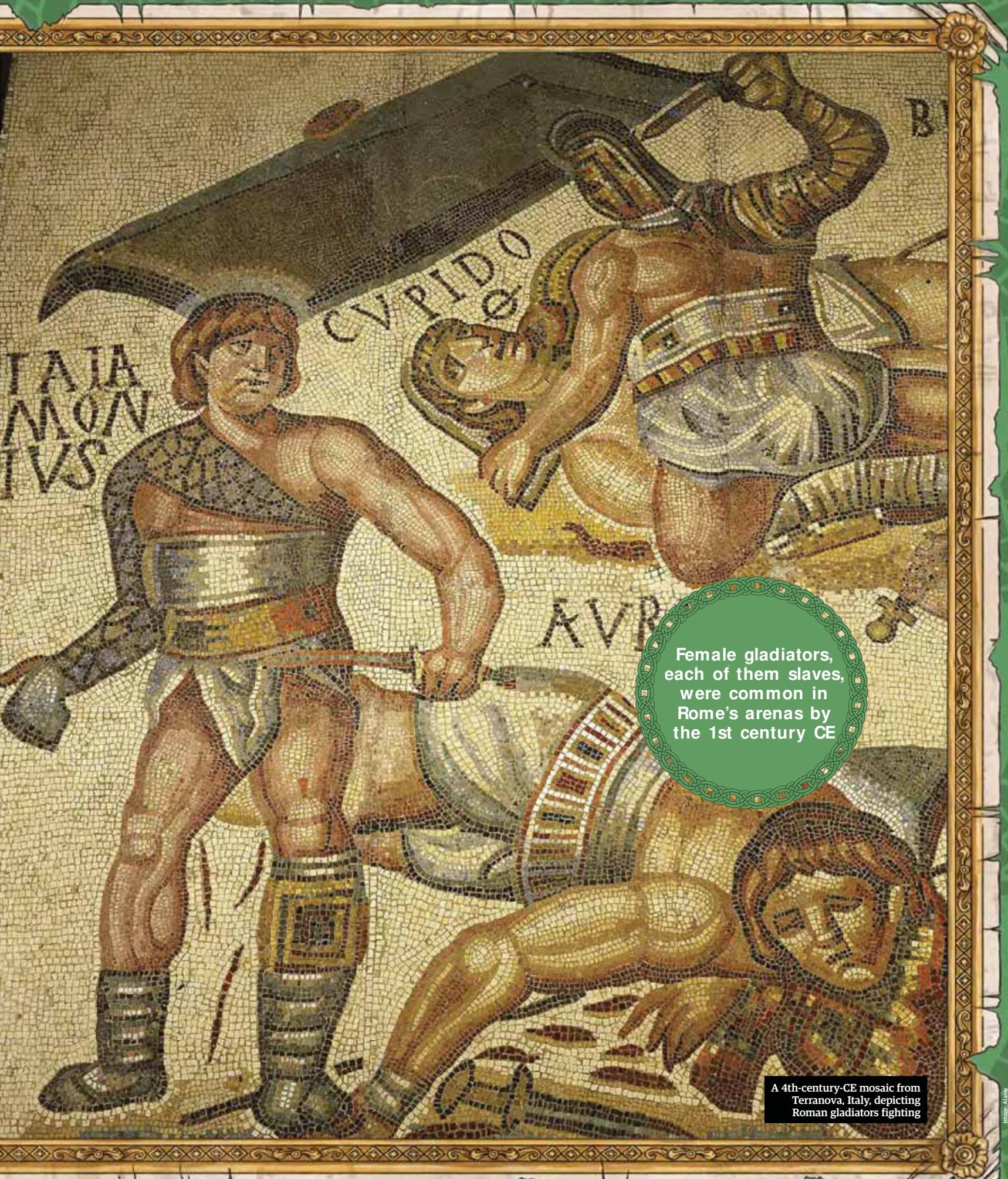
The ordinary Romans were literate, or at least semi-literate, visiting libraries and enjoying the work of satirists such as Juvenal, who proved so influential that, in 1738, poet Samuel Johnson would model his work, *London*, on Juvenal's 'Satire III'. But to concentrate on the arts is to tell half a story: the Romans came to love large visual, mainly brutal events so much more. The rulers knew that and used huge games to paper over the cracks of the empire's struggles.

Their greatest innovation was truly turning sport from something that was played into something that would be watched for pleasure, celebrating the athleticism of man and gleaning great reflected glory from the achievements of the strong competitors to a greater degree

than the Greeks. Huge amphitheatres and stadia dominated Roman towns and cities and they became proud and powerful focal points. Spectator sports also became hugely organised with large teams looking to get the best out of those competing.

Individuals and groups of friends could find their own pursuits, though, away from the huge venues. They wanted to be fed and entertained, and so it became known as *panem et circenses*; bread and circuses. Board games were very popular among citizens with the two-player strategy board game *Ludus latrunculorum* drawing on military tactics and being played across the empire. Tic-Tac-Toe, which survives today although it is more familiar to some as Noughts and Crosses, kept minds ticking over in ancient Roman times.

The countryside would be home to hunters and recreational fishing. There was also boxing, wrestling, swimming, throwing and riding, as well as a version of football, known as *Harpastum*, which was played on a pitch. It was depicted in drawings as having two sides. With the aim appearing to be to keep the ball in their own half, the game was seen as a way to keep soldiers fit and healthy.



A 4th-century-CE mosaic from Terranova, Italy, depicting Roman gladiators fighting

Land of gore and glory

Wild beasts wouldn't tear people away from the Rome's spectacles. Indeed, they'd have citizens flocking to stadia in their droves

Ancient Romans loved their bloody sports and for more than 650 years, they turned up in their tens of thousands to enjoy the ferocious spectacles of gladiatorial combats and chariot racing, admiring the courage of the participants while thriving on the inherent danger. Far from being seen as barbaric or cruel, whether to man or beast, such forms of entertainment were embraced and celebrated, seen as defining the Roman civilisation. Since the empire's citizens prized physical fitness, those who took part were often seen as symbols of strength, especially for the wealthy sponsors of the well-publicised shows.

Sports tended to be all-male affairs both in terms of those competing and those who gathered to watch. Huge stadia and arenas were built in Rome, from the splendour of the Colosseum, completed in 80 BCE for crowds of up to 80,000 to the vast, long and narrow Circus Maximus on Palatine Hill, which would be packed with as many as 250,000 people for the most popular events. Since sport was enjoyed across the empire, more than 230 steeply seated ancient amphitheatres have been discovered across all territories, all of which would have been a source of civic pride, many clad with marble and decorated with statues. Britain's largest was in Chester.

Crowds would gain free entry to events, which was a way for emperors to make themselves popular. Romans would seize the opportunity to watch sports, making an entire day of it. The huge popularity of such occasions meant that even the largest venues became overcrowded, leading to fights among those trying to get in. But unlike today, the people they watched and those who were associated with show business, even in sport, were seen of low social standing. While the crowds would have their favourites and some competitors would become very famous as a result, sportsmen were typically slaves, criminals or war captives.

Miliarius was the name given to a charioteer or horse who won more than 1,000 races

In light of that, it's very easy to say that the Romans saw them as dispensable and that the crowds had a true sadistic streak. But while that is certainly going to be true of some of those who attended, in reality Roman sport was actually symbolic. Gladiatorial bouts had their origins in the funeral ceremonies of wealthy nobles (the first was a combat staged in honour of Junius

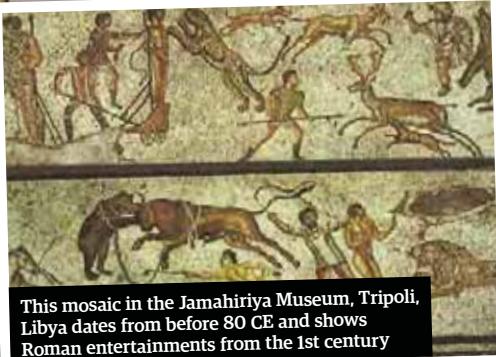
Brutus Pera in 264 BCE, with three slaves having been selected to fight at the Forum Boarium cattle market).

In that instance, it was less about the thrill of a kill and more about the belief that spilt blood would help purify the soul of the deceased.

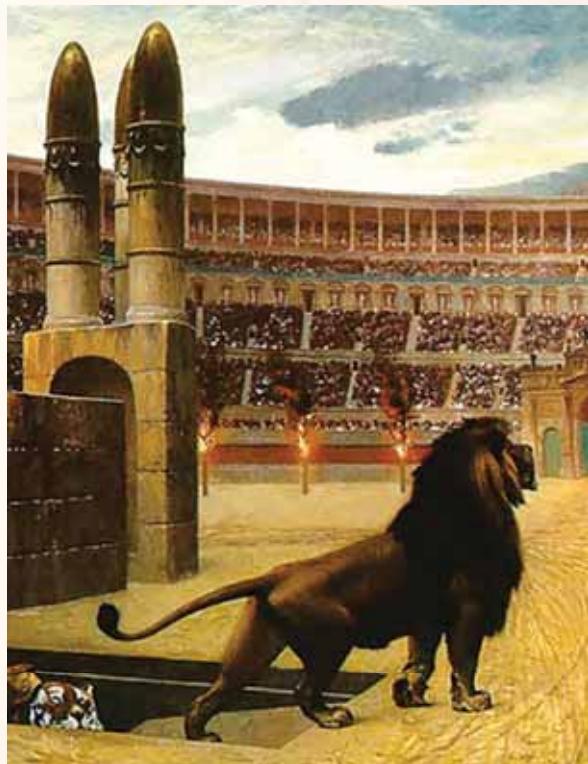
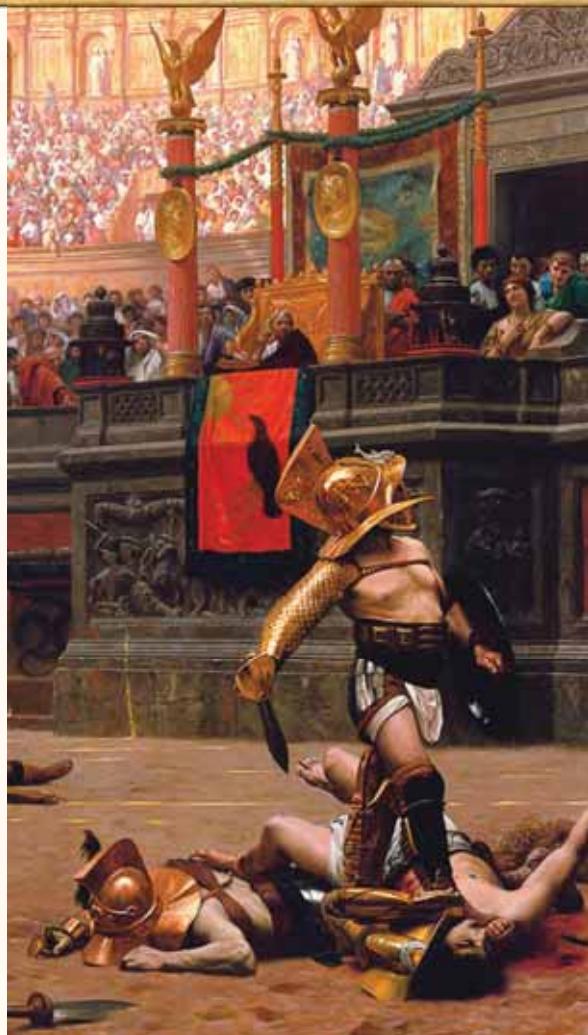
The fights bestowed political prestige on a family, which is why the funeral shows became more elaborate, involving greater numbers of gladiators. Eventually, emperors began to stage them as entertainment in their own right, again for the popularity it brought them. The crowds began to enjoy more than blood being spilt, too; there were complex rules and regulations, and gladiators would have their own fighting styles. The contests could be very tactical.

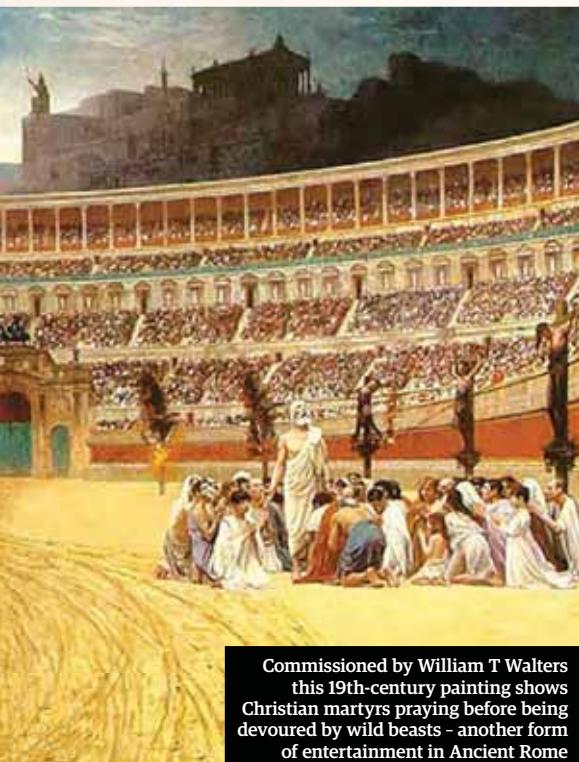
In fact, crowds loved to see certain skills pitted against each other. Many Romans thrived on the shows between sword-and-shield murmillo and Thraex gladiators, for instance. Their different sized shields forced them to adopt different ways of harming their opponent and it lent an exciting tactical air to the proceedings. This love of mashing-up of styles extended to other ancient sports: getting different animals to face off - elephants against lions, perhaps - got the crowds very giddy indeed.

But there were other reasons for sport, which could be starkly seen at the chariot races that were a betting man's dream. As the charioteers - slaves or former slaves backed by large expert teams of trainers, vets and blacksmiths - competed over 12 daily races (or 24 under chariot race fanatic Caligula), much money was won and lost. There would be four teams - the Whites, Reds, Blues and Greens - and the addition of money only served to enhance the thrill. Not that it was any less dangerous a sport, with many riders suffering injury or death. More gentle were the trick-riding exhibitions that tended to be staged alongside the races. Roman taste in entertainment could certainly be very diverse.



This mosaic in the Jamahiriya Museum, Tripoli, Libya dates from before 80 CE and shows Roman entertainments from the 1st century





ROME'S MOST POPULAR SPORTS

Sports and entertainment were synonymous in Ancient Rome, as athletes became famous icons that drew huge crowds

Gladiators

Rather than involve multiple gladiators in an unruly fight to the death, gladiatorial combats came to be structured, refereed battles between two well-trained men. Schooling in the art of fighting would take many years and much expense so while emperors in the Colosseum and the excitable crowd at venues elsewhere would decide whether to spare a gladiator, there was actually a reluctance to do so given the fees trainers would command for deaths.



The most popular of all spectator sports, armed men in violent fights had Romans flocking to arenas

Chariot racing

Chariot racing was one of the few sports women could watch and it came with its own terrifying dangers. Up to 300,000 people would pack the long, narrow Circus Maximus on the Palatine Hill as teams of charioteers scorched the earth completing seven anti-clockwise laps. Chariots would typically be pulled by four horses but sometimes more. There would be many heart-in-mouth moments as wheels smashed into stone and riders as the rider jostled for position.



It's said that Rome's founder Romulus used chariot racing to distract the Sabine men

"It tapped into the Roman love of a great spectacle and appealed to an emperor's penchant for showing off"

Wild beasts

Roman crowds would start the day watching huntsmen in the arenas showing their skills. Wild beasts, from elephants to lions, would also be thrown together in combat. Arenas would be decorated with trees and shrubs for a greater spectacle, and the crowds lapped up man's dominance over nature. Audiences also liked watching men enter the arena to fight animals, and massive crowds would flock to see a sideline of Christians and convicted criminals getting mauled.



Whether called to do tricks or to fight against each other, wild beasts played a part in sporting life

Water sports

The huge space of the amphitheatres would be flooded with water so that competitors could engage in gigantic naval battles. This would happen at both the Colosseum and Circus Maximus, where small ancient vessels would battle it out. It tapped into the Roman love of a great spectacle and appealed to an emperor's penchant for showing off. Eventually lakes would be used for this purpose and the captives who competed in them were called naiunachiarri.



The staging of naval battles as mass entertainment would have been an amazing spectacle

Fun plays and serious plays

Romans got into their rhythm by setting down to a riot of dance, poetry and theatre while still finding time to exercise and relax

While the Romans preferred the large spectacles of gladiatorial battles and chariot racing, there was still room for more intellectual entertainment. Roman theatres were based upon those of Greece and they became home to comedies and dramas. There was poetry based around morality and patriotism, as well as farce and satire. And while it appears the Romans felt their art did not measure up to Greek art, there was much high-style output.

Roman historian Livy suggested the first theatre performance was held in 364 BCE,

with dancers and musicians brought over from Etruria in the belief they could stop a plague. Mime became very popular, bringing together song and spoken dialogue with farcical scenes brought to life in an exaggerated manner. But it was pantomime - a Roman invention - that struck a greater chord with the populace. Audiences loved how the non-speaking masked dancers would use their body and rhythmic gestures to portray various characters.

The Greco-Roman dramatist and epic poet Lucius Livius Andronicus, born in c.284 BCE,

translated Greek works into Latin and heralded the beginning of popular, serious dramas. Later, Titus Maccius Plautus introduced literary comedy, producing more than 130 plays, of which just 20 have survived intact. Publius Terentius Afer - or Terence - wrote *Andria* (*The Girl from Andros*), a comedy much beloved by the day's most popular playwright, Caecilius Statius. Tragedies, however, were less popular, and that has been said to be due to the large size of theatres being acoustically unsuitable for spoken dialogue.

INSIDE A ROMAN THEATRE

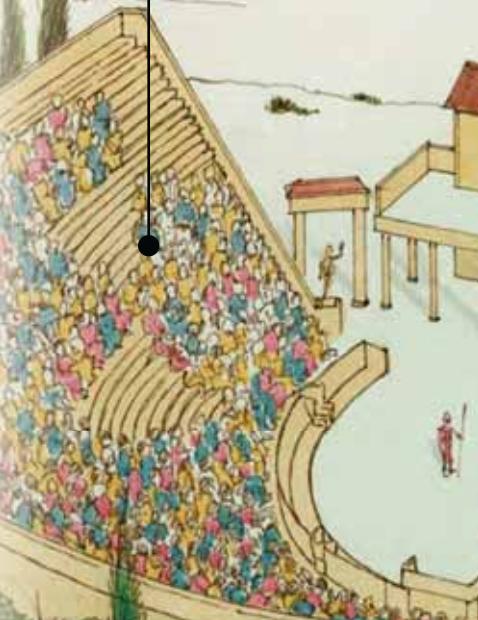
Built to provide good views and acoustics

Seating area

The spectators would sit on the terraces of the half-circle auditorium in raised seating for a better view.

Stage background

The high back wall of the stage floor is called the *scaene frons*, adding visual impact and often supporting a roof.



The stage

The actors would naturally perform at the front of the theatre on a stage (pulpitum), whereas the stage front (proscenium) would be typically decorated with statues.

The orchestra

The orchestra - the space between the stage and the audience - was semi-circular in Roman theatres and could be used for hosting "spectacles".

In and out

In order to allow crowds to get in and out of the theatre, vomitoria would allow passage beneath the seat tiers.

Guests of honour

Those worthy of honour - perhaps for municipal services - would be granted seats in front or surrounding the orchestra.

Indeed, theatres would hold up to 15,000 people and would often be packed. So to help crowds in the worst of the seating identify what was going on, the characters' clothing would indicate their status and role: rich men would wear purple, poor men red; soldiers wore short cloaks and slaves short tunics. There would be stock characters, particularly in comedy, with women eventually appearing in plays, sometimes naked, but usually in heavy masks.

Men and women were generally segregated in social settings and this included the popular baths where Romans

would go to clean and relax for hours on end while socialising with friends and acquaintances. There would be separate bath times, with men bathing in the afternoon, and facilities to exercise. The bath houses also doubled as performance venues (as did the streets outside), with acrobats and jugglers on hand to provide quick, fun entertainment. For the more learned, libraries within the buildings would make books available to read.

Exercise facilities were also provided, again tapping into their desire for fitness. It wasn't as fanatical a pursuit as it was for the Greeks, but

"Men bathed in the afternoon, and facilities to exercise"

gymnasiums and open spaces were provided. Some Romans enjoyed playing ball games, notably Trigon. It involved three people standing in a triangle, throwing the ball with the left hand and catching it with the right. Athletes would also compete in public games and festivals - effectively days of rest for the rest of the population since they didn't observe weekends. Work hard, play hard seemed to be the motto.

There were 29 libraries in Rome by 350 CE, with citizens enjoying reading long strips of papyrus

REMNANTS OF THEATRES AND STADIA FOUND



The most famous of all Rome's stadia is the Colosseum, completed in 80 CE, hundreds of years into Roman rule. But it was just one of many stadia, amphitheatres and theatres, hundreds of which were spread across the provinces.

The Romans brought their own engineering skills to these buildings: unlike in Greece, for instance,

open-air theatres didn't need to be built in sunken ground because their hemispheres could be erected on vaults. There is evidence of these structures across former Roman lands, and they still stand today.

In Britain, Chester's Roman amphitheatre from the 1st century CE was the largest, but remains have also been found in Silchester, Colchester, Cirencester,

Dorchester, London and St Albans among other towns and cities. Archaeologists in Córdoba, Spain, found Europe's second-largest amphitheatre (after the Colosseum) in 2003. Good examples to visit are the Uthina and El Djem amphitheatres in Tunisia, the Verona Arena in Italy, and the magnificent Pula Arena in Croatia.

Circus Maximus

Discover the arenas in which Rome's best would duke it out for the entertainment of the masses

The Circus Maximus was the Ancient Roman equivalent of a modern-day concert hall. This huge sports venue was host to a plethora of exciting, dangerous and exhilarating activities enjoyed by the entire city. The circus was originally built in the 6th century BCE as a chariot racetrack, located in the valley between the Palatine and Aventine Hills. Its main purpose was to host the Roman Games, the oldest and most famous games in the city. Held every September, it featured 15 days of perilous, heart-pounding chariot races.

Chariot racing was no casual pastime; there was huge monetary and personal reward for those brave riders who emerged from the track victorious. Similar to modern footballers, chariot racers were beloved by fans and celebrated for their valiant victories. However, winning was no

easy task, and all the men who competed risked life and limb for fame and fortune.

The different chariot teams were colour coded green, red, blue and white, and rivalry between the supporters of different teams was heated and occasionally violent. The chariots used were akin to war chariots, and the riders were held in place at their feet. The sharp turns were the most dangerous part of every heated, high-speed race, where chariots could be knocked, overturned and crushed. Although causing opponents to crash was strictly illegal, collisions were still very common.

The Circus Maximus was not only used for chariot racing, though - it was also host to a variety of other thrilling events such as wild animal hunts, gladiator fights and public executions.

It also was the venue for less exciting business such as religious ceremonies, public feasts and plays. The site continued to be used for chariot racing until the 6th century CE, when it was left to decay, many of its materials being used for building works. Since the mid 19th century, excavations have uncovered more of the original seating and today it is used as a large park area, hosting concerts and festivals.

Seating

When the Circus Maximus was first built, the seating was made out of wood and reserved for the elite of society. Seats for commoners were later added, but wooden stands would have frequently rotted, and stone seating later replaced it. Caesar extended the seating to go around almost the entire track. The seating rose three storeys high, with only the highest seats made from wood.

The starting signal

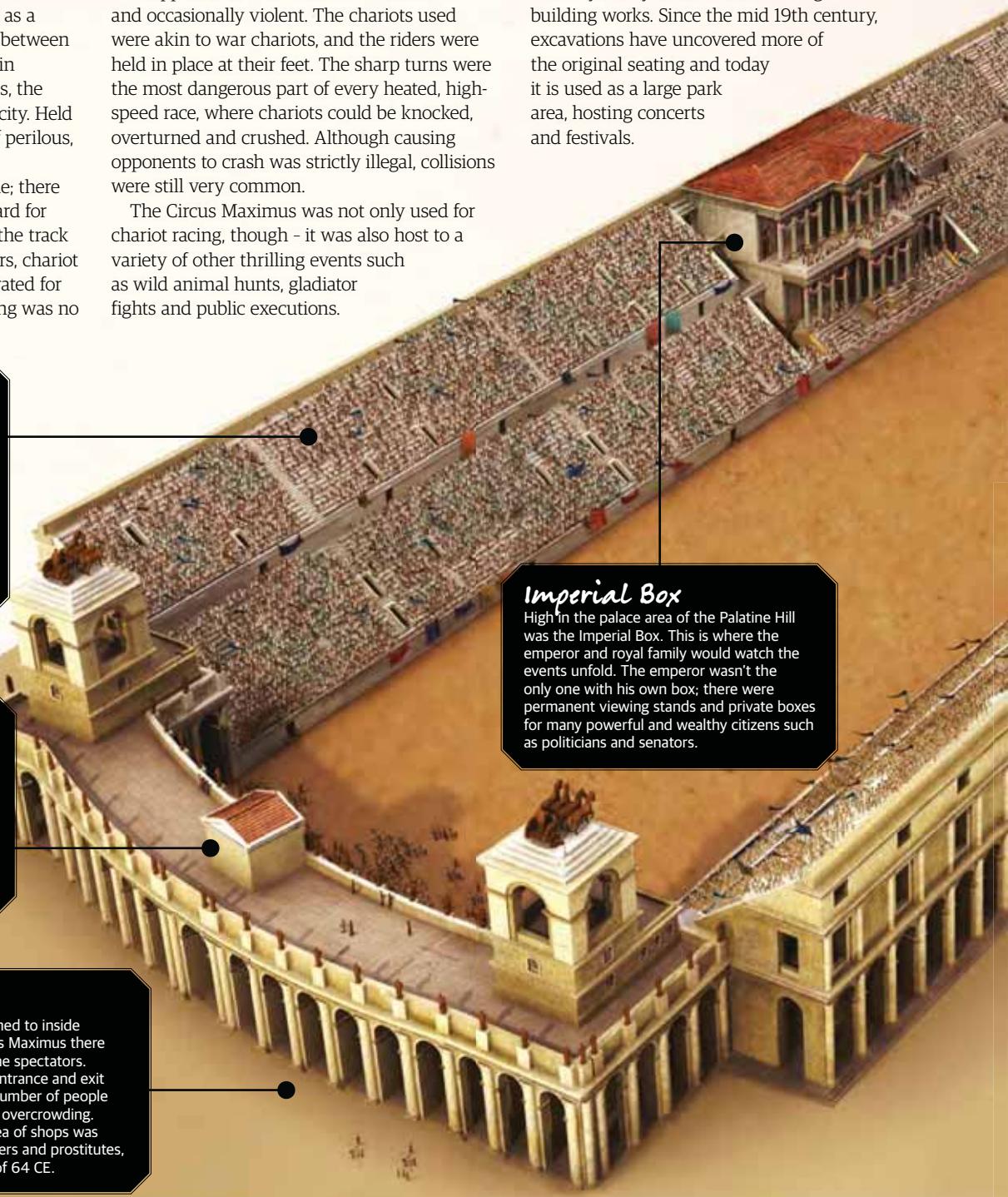
The race began from 12 gates known as carceres, six from either side of the entrance. The gates were built along a slight curve so the distance travelled by the chariots was equal for all. Above the gates, the presiding magistrate sat and signalled the start of the race by dropping a white flag, at which time the gates opened and the race began.

Outside

The festivities weren't confined to inside the arena. Outside the Circus Maximus there were many shops open to the spectators. Every shop had a separate entrance and exit to accommodate the huge number of people visiting them without risk of overcrowding. Dionysius wrote that this area of shops was inhabited by cooks, astrologers and prostitutes, and was the site of the fire of 64 CE.

Imperial Box

High in the palace area of the Palatine Hill was the Imperial Box. This is where the emperor and royal family would watch the events unfold. The emperor wasn't the only one with his own box; there were permanent viewing stands and private boxes for many powerful and wealthy citizens such as politicians and senators.



The audience

The games were one of the most important events in the Roman calendar. Members of every echelon of society gathered, from peasants to the emperor himself, in the arena, which could seat an estimated 150,000. Love poets wrote that race days were the ideal place to find a lady, while Christian preachers warned that the circus was full of sin, and just as corrupt as a brothel.

Starting procession

Before the race began there was a procession through the circus. Images of the gods were carried around the track in a grand display – some were in carriages, in frames, and others on men's shoulders. They were followed by attendants on foot and horseback and behind them were dancers, musicians and combatants. This procession was followed by sacred rites delivered by priests.

Spina

The Spina was a brick wall barrier that ran straight down the middle of almost the entire length of the Circus Maximus. This wall was approximately 3.5 metres wide and 1.2 metres high. Emperor Augustus erected an obelisk in the middle, which reached 40 metres high and had been brought from Egypt. The chariots would turn around the ends of the Spina, which were protected by three ornamented cones.

Eggs and dolphins

There were two columns near the end of the Spina with marble crossbars. Mounted on these crossbars were large sculpted eggs, one of which was removed every time the chariots completed a circuit to indicate how many laps were remaining. Eggs were chosen as they were believed to be the symbol of the divine patrons of Rome, Castor and Pollux. In 33 BCE, large bronze dolphins were also added for greater visibility of the current race progress.

The track

The circus itself was a long oblong, which measured 621 metres by 118 metres wide. The entire circumference of the stadium was a mile (1.6 kilometres) around. A canal, three metres wide by three metres deep, was later cut between the track and the seating, which protected the spectators and helped drain the track.

Competitors

The drivers of the carriages were of low social status, often slaves or freedmen. Slaves especially had something to gain from winning races, as if they won enough, they could buy their freedom. Often the driver did not own the chariot and horses he raced with, instead using those belonging to wealthier citizens. This meant that, as women were able to own chariots, they could be the winners of a race they were prohibited from taking part in through ownership.



THE ROLES OF ROMAN WOMEN

Ancient Rome wasn't an equal society and women were expected to behave and live differently to men

Words David Crookes



Ancient Rome was a male-dominated society. Women were distinctly overshadowed by men and it wasn't even a case of large numbers of females trying in vain to break a glass ceiling or struggling to make their way within a macho world. The vast majority simply weren't allowed to get that far because they didn't share the same legal status as men.

One thing at least, the head of a household didn't have the right to simply kill his wife if they questioned his authority. This was thought to have been the case for quite a long time, but 'patria potestas' - the power of a Roman father - thankfully didn't appear to stretch to such a terrible extent.

Even so, Roman women always remained 'in manu' which meant they were legally controlled by a man. As a child this controlling role would be assumed by a woman's father; as a wife the situation could either remain that way ('sine manu') or see control pass to her husband ('cum manu').

It created a misogynistic society in which women lived within strict boundaries. They could not play a role in public life so, unlike in Ancient Egypt, there were no direct women rulers; no equivalent to Cleopatra. Women could not become senators, judges, consuls or generals. They were

unable to speak in political assemblies, they were barred from voting in elections and could not take on any role in the military. Instead, a woman was primarily expected to look after

The Vestals were held in high esteem by Ancient Roman society and were in charge of the state religion

the household, including any children, while overseeing the family's slave workforce. Women also had to make clothes by spinning, weaving and sewing cloth. And while they were busy toiling, there was also pressure on them to keep up a good appearance.

To achieve this, most opted for cheap home-grown make-up, but wealthier women were able to afford imported cosmetics from Gaul, China and Germany. Perfumes were popular and were associated with a healthy body, but there was a nagging sense that women couldn't win, even in this game of expectation: the poet Juvenal wrote that "a woman buys scents and lotions with adultery in mind"!

Still, it wasn't entirely bad. Middle- and upper-class women were taught basic reading and writing skills despite some men believing



Men generally ran businesses but women were also allowed work in such a way



"A Roman woman was primarily expected to look after the household"

literacy would lead their wives astray. Women could also own and inherit property and they could run businesses, allowing them to independently amass great wealth in some instances. They could work as merchants and midwives, or take jobs as dancers and even doctors. There were female teachers, hairdressers and scribes. Some became wet nurses, although Roman doctors firmly believed mothers should breast-feed their own children.

Nevertheless, marriage was important. Women were allowed to get hitched from the age of 12, which, aside from being highly illegal today, sadly meant their childhoods were largely over in the blink of an eye. At this point, a woman could switch from the feminine form of her father's name to that of her husband. This was usually indicated by adding the letter 'a' at the end.



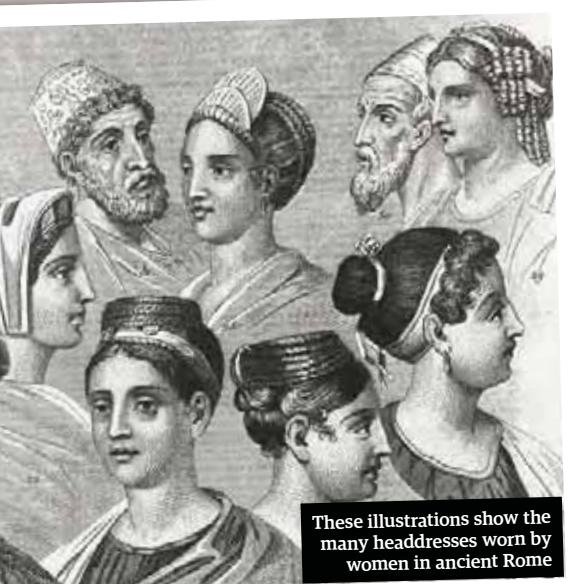
Wives of noblemen would have servants to help them in the running of the house

If things weren't working out, a woman was free to request a parting of the ways. Divorce was actually common, not to mention quick and easy. It only needed either the wife or husband to say the marriage was over, and that was that. Sometimes a woman's father would bring a marriage to an end, such was his ongoing power over his daughter's life. Women didn't leave empty-handed either. A wife often signed a prenuptial contract stating how much dowry she'd receive when a marriage was dissolved.

Marriage could have distinct perks, particularly if a woman wed a powerful man. Fulvia, wife of Mark Antony, is believed to have had a significant influence on policies he enacted. In 42 BCE, when Antony and his fellow co-rulers left Rome to track down the assassins of Julius Caesar, Fulvia was effectively left in charge as Rome's de-facto co-leader. While Antony was visiting Egypt in 41 BCE and Fulvia

felt his hold on power was threatened, she even raised legions to fight in support of her husband.

Religion also appeared to offer a path to great respect. The Vestal Virgins were a small group of priestesses, specially chosen between the ages of six and ten, who were responsible for maintaining the Temple of Vesta's perpetual sacred fire over 30 years of dedicated service. These women were highly honoured, protected and allowed to vote, own property and write a will. But this role wasn't without its pitfalls and men devised punishments for the Vestals if they were deemed to have failed in their duties. For example, the fifth king of Rome, Tarquin the Elder, decided a Vestal who lost her virginity should be buried alive. Other transgressions, such as letting the sacred fire go out, were met with beatings. Sadly, women's privileges were only granted on the say-so of men, although more freedoms were granted as time went on.



These illustrations show the many headdresses worn by women in ancient Rome

CAESAR'S RISE TO POWER

How one man's ambition and genius transformed Rome from a republic to a dictatorship



From Caesar's birth in 100 BCE to the time he crossed the Rubicon River in a brazen act of rebellion in 49 BCE, the Roman Senate floor was a battleground, where power was taken by cunning, conspiracy and force. The powder keg had exploded into conflict in 88 BCE with the first in a series of civil wars and rebellions, with the conservative elite locked in combat with the growing ranks of populists. Rome was full of orators, soldiers and politicians fighting for control. Gaius Julius Caesar was all three.

Caesar knew what he was capable of and what he wanted, and when Caesar saw an opportunity, he took it. His cunning, ruthlessness and the sheer scope of his ambition would change the landscape of Western Europe and beyond. After decades of outrage and protest, adoration and adulation, only his murder could finally put a stop to Caesar's vision. But, even as his blood cooled on the Senate floor, there was no doubt the change he brought about was irrevocable.

From a young age, Caesar showed the qualities that would propel him through the corrupt world of Roman politics. In 82 BCE, when Caesar was 18 years old, his family was in a precarious position. They were linked to the

regime of the popular consul Gaius Marius by marriage, so when Marius's bitter enemy, Sulla, took power by force, they had to capitulate to this new regime to survive.

Sulla ordered Caesar to abandon his position as high priest of Jupiter and to break off his marriage to Cornelia, daughter of Marius's old ally Cinna. With a stubbornness that bordered on suicidal, Caesar refused to kneel and went into hiding until his mother could convince Sulla to give him a reprieve.

Instead of idly waiting for Sulla's forgiveness, Caesar took the first step on what would prove to be a long and illustrious career. He joined the military and travelled to Asia in service of the state. He quickly proved himself in battle, earning the Civic Crown (one of the highest military decorations available to a Roman soldier) for saving the life of one of his men.

This dedication to his fellow soldiers would be a cornerstone of Caesar's life in the army, as he understood how vital the respect and loyalty of his men would be. His spotless reputation was threatened when he was sent to obtain a fleet from the Bithynian monarch Nicomedes though. Caesar spent so long at Nicomedes' court that word spread the young soldier was engaged in an affair with the king. Whether or not there was any truth to

Though their love affair is legendary, Caesar could not have married Cleopatra as she was not a Roman citizen





ROME BEFORE CAESAR

Before Caesar stepped onto the Senate floor, the Roman political system was divided in two: the optimates and the populists. Every politician stated their belief in freedom, but the problem was that the two groups had different ideas about what exactly freedom meant.

The Senate had become something close to a private club run by the optimates, where privilege, status and who you knew meant power. However, the libertarian ideal meant something very different to the populists, who made their voices heard in the People's Assembly. Both groups believed they were acting in the best interests of the republic, and both used the word 'liberty' in their manifestos, but they agreed on practically nothing, leading to political chaos.

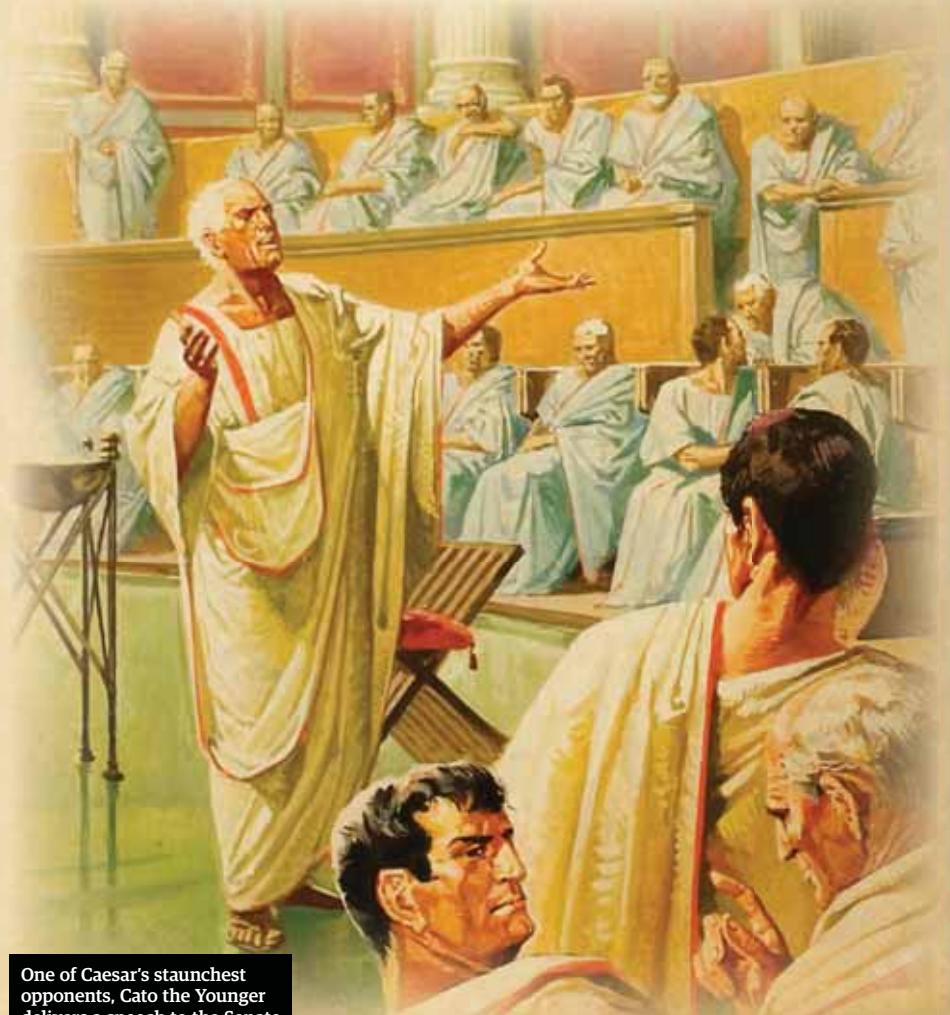
The populists and conservatives would face each other in the Plebeian Assembly where they would fight for the popular vote. It would seem that the popular vote would surely have gone to the populists, but the conservatives had several points in their favour. The voters who could afford to travel from outside of Rome would often side

with the elite, while others could easily be bribed. The outrage over this corruption, along with the government's military failures in Gaul and North Africa, led to a precarious state of affairs for anyone occupying the position of consul.

General Gaius Marius was elected to improve Rome's military operations overseas and was immensely popular. When Sulla, an optimate general, was elected for the same reason, the populists panicked and tried to recall him. An enraged Sulla responded by executing the tribune who had proposed the order and establishing himself as Rome's dictator, instigating Rome's first civil war.

Marius and Sulla battled for power until the former died of natural causes, leaving Sulla without any political opposition in the Senate. He spent the remainder of his time in office working to diminish the influence of the populists and increase the power of the conservatives.

When Sulla died in 78 BCE, the people were desperate for a voice in the Senate, and Julius Caesar was ready to speak for them.



One of Caesar's staunchest opponents, Cato the Younger delivers a speech to the Senate

the rumour, Caesar certainly denied it fiercely at every opportunity. While the rumour never quite went away, it didn't slow him down.

When Sulla died in 78 BCE, the stage was set for Caesar's return to Rome. He had proven himself as a soldier and now it was time to demonstrate one of his other skills. He entered the legal profession and used his other great talent: his voice. Caesar was a charismatic and persuasive public speaker, and he used this to full effect. The Roman political system was in a constant state of imbalance between the wealthy elite that occupied the Senate and the populists who raged against such flagrant inequality. Caesar's gift for public speaking helped him gain the support of the populace as he targeted corruption in the aristocracy. Caesar needed the people to love him and his every gesture was made with one eye on their reaction.

It wasn't just his grandstanding in the courthouse that was making him popular. The public loved a good story and Caesar had a knack for providing them. In 75 BCE he was captured by pirates while sailing to Greece, who planned on holding him to ransom to the tune of 20 talents of gold. Caesar had no intention of being ransomed for so paltry a sum and told them so. Instead, he convinced his captors to raise their price to 50.

The story that returned to Rome with Caesar was that the group kept up a lively, jovial atmosphere, in which the prisoner promised that, when he was released, he would hunt them down and kill them as punishment for their crimes. The pirates may not have taken him at his word and that would prove a fatal mistake. As soon as he was freed, Caesar led a group that captured, imprisoned and crucified them. Ruthless treatment indeed, but ever with an eye on the crowd, Caesar showed a measure of mercy and ordered that their throats be slit first to spare them the agony of the execution. After all, they had treated him well.

An opportunity to face greater odds and test himself as a leader on the battlefield arose when fighting broke out in Asia Minor. Caesar raised a military force and defended Rome's territory long enough for his commanders to launch a counterattack. He returned home a hero and was promptly elected military tribune, followed by an appointment as quaestor (a kind of magistrate) for southern Spain and Portugal soon after.

This magisterial position put him in charge of finances in the region and gave him bureaucratic and administrative experience that would serve him well. When he returned to Rome for his Aunt Julia's funeral, Caesar gave a eulogy that left nobody in any doubt about his ambition or self-belief. In this speech, he reiterated that his late aunt's illustrious lineage could be traced back to the gods themselves. It

"The public loved a good story and Caesar had a knack for providing them"

would not have been lost on anyone present that Caesar was taking this opportunity to remind everyone that he was also from holy stock. A man descended from the gods would not be content with remaining a magistrate.

Now back in Rome, Caesar had taken his first steps on the political ladder and he quickly showed he wasn't going to stop. Although he preached against corruption, Caesar was not above bribing anyone who might help him get what he wanted. As he leapfrogged from aedile in 65 BCE to high priest in 63 to praetor in 62, he was falling deeper into debt and making some formidable enemies - particularly the apparently incorruptible senator Cato the Younger.

A nearly fatal stumble occurred when Caesar was forced to slip out of two scandals in quick

succession. Many believed that he had been involved in Catiline's attempt to assassinate the then-consul Cicero, while he was forced to divorce his wife when it became clear that she'd been in part responsible for the Bona Dea scandal.

While the former plot involved the overthrow of the government, the latter, in which it was clear that a man had attended an exclusively female religious ceremony and thus desecrated it, was far more embarrassing. Both were costly, and Caesar ended up bankrupting himself to stay above them. If he had any intention of going further - which he certainly did - Caesar not only needed more money, he needed to get some muscle on side.

Financial backing came from the extremely

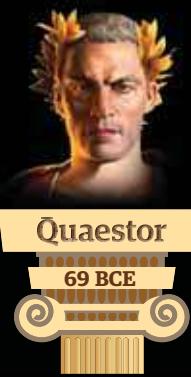
wealthy Marcus Crassus. Crassus had made his name as a young general fighting with Sulla, but his real talent lay with making money from properties and buying and selling slaves. Caesar's debts were so serious that he couldn't even leave Rome to start his new governorship in Spain before he made some repayments. Fortunately, Crassus saw how popular Caesar was and agreed to satisfy some of his creditors, allowing Caesar to go on to yet more military triumphs in his Spanish Wars.

He crushed the rebelling tribes and looted their cities before helping the region extricate itself from debt. Once again, Caesar returned home a hero and with his eye on the next step up: the consulship. He was so determined to obtain the position that he passed up the opportunity for a military parade through the city in order to put his application forward before the deadline. Adulation could wait; his rise to power could not.

He may have had money and he certainly had popularity, but Caesar knew that he needed brute force to combat his enemies in the Senate and keep them quiet. In a moment of brilliant

CAESAR'S PATH TO THE TOP

Assuming dictatorial control over a republic requires a rigid career plan



Quaestor

69 BCE



Aedile

65 BCE



Praetor

62 BCE



Consul

59 BCE



Governor

58 BCE



Dictator

49 BCE

In 69 BCE, Caesar was elected quaestor for Baetica (Andalucía). The position was similar to that of a magistrate combined with an accountant; Caesar oversaw the finances of the region and conducted investigations where necessary. This role may have inspired his vision of a smoother-running state and his later innovations to Roman infrastructure.

An aedile organised games and looked after Rome's public buildings and markets. Caesar used this position to win public favour by staging immense gladiatorial games, with over 640 gladiators. The Senate was wary of the furore of the event and set a limit on how many gladiators one man could keep, but the message was clear: Caesar knew what the common people wanted.

The praetor position combined the duties of an aedile and a quaestor. They were senior magistrates appointed to oversee civil matters, while others had specific courts to head up. In the absence of a consul, the praetor took power. Just one step before consulship, at this point Caesar's opponents were beginning to grow anxious as he showed no signs of slowing down.

The consulship was a presidential post shared by two men that had been established after the Romans abolished the monarchy. It came with a lot of power, too, as the consul had control of the republic's finances, the military and the justice system. Although a consul was supposed to listen to the Senate's advice, they could not be tried until their term of office was over.

A governor, or proconsul, was a regional position that had many of the same duties as a consul. Lucrative and powerful, it was the traditional posting following a consulship, and a proconsul could not face prosecution until his term had finished. As governor of Gaul, Caesar added modern-day France and Belgium to the empire and ventured on expeditions to Britain.

'Dictator' was the title given to a magistrate who was temporarily entrusted with the full authority of the state to deal with a military emergency, and Caesar was granted this in 49 BCE. However, he managed to hold onto this title and then in 44 BCE, he became dictator for life. This removed the time limit on his dictatorship - not that it mattered in the end.

inspiration, he turned to a respected general and Crassus's bitterest rival, Gnaeus Pompeius – otherwise known as Pompey.

In 62 BCE Pompey had returned from campaigns in Syria and Judaea that were so successful it made the Roman senators nervous. In order to limit his power, they ignored his request to ratify the treaties he had secured and the promises he had made to his soldiers. The general was eager to lend his support to somebody who might get things done and restore his pride.

Caesar convinced Crassus and Pompey that the benefits of power were worth putting aside their differences and formed the First Triumvirate in 60 BCE. To seal their agreement, Pompey married Caesar's daughter, Julia, while Caesar married Calpurnia, the daughter of a friend of Crassus. This political powerhouse terrified the Senate – particularly Cato, who set himself directly in opposition to the ambitious candidate.

What came next was a political campaign so dirty and underhanded that even Cato, renowned for his honesty, was forced to resort to bribery to keep Caesar out. It didn't work. With money, muscle and cunning, Caesar was unstoppable. He was elected consul in 59 BCE.

While he took care of his friends (Pompey was appointed governor

in Spain and Crassus a general), Caesar's time as consul cemented his reputation for ruthlessness. If his powers of persuasion weren't enough, Pompey's soldiers intimidated any opposition in the Senate. Caesar's co-consul (and Cato's son-in-law), Bibulus, could mutter about omens all he liked; he was intimidated and ignored to such an extent that he finally fled for the safety of his own home. It's rumoured that Pompey's soldiers even went as far as tipping a bucket of faeces over his head.

Caesar didn't limit his rough treatment to his colleague. He imprisoned Cato for disagreeing with him and used Pompey's soldiers to clear the Forum of opposition. His methods were so outrageous, it was certain that he would be tried for his crimes once he gave up office. Caesar was well aware of this and secured the position of proconsul in Gaul for a five-year tenure, despite Cato's objections, allowing him to leave Rome before he could be prosecuted. It was time to face conflict on a much larger scale.

Cato was afraid that Caesar was going to use his position in Gaul to instigate conflict, and he was proved right. Caesar immediately set about provoking the Helvetii, a Swiss tribe, into an attack, which was the equivalent of a starter's pistol for years of relentless and wide-ranging campaigning. His attacks were ruthless

and daring, and his responses to those of his enemies were quick-witted and precise.

The Gallic and Germanic tribes were subdued between 57–55 BCE, at which point he sailed for Britain. There was no lasting success across the Channel but, as Cato had feared, tales of his ambitious exploits were getting back to Rome. Word reached the Senate that Gaul was pacified in 53 BCE. Cato could declare that Caesar was acting in his own interests and not those of the state, but the people loved him for protecting Rome. Time and again, Caesar knew how to endear himself to the masses and camped near Italy in winter to allow stories of his victories – not to mention treasure – to trickle back.

Even as he waged war across northern Europe, Caesar was aware that his time as proconsul would have to end. He knew all too well that once he returned to Rome he would face a serious list of charges, both from his time as consul and as a general. His attacks in Germany were so savage and fierce that he was forced to spin them to avoid losing popularity. But the further Caesar took his army, the greater fortune he amassed and the more soldiers he was able to recruit. Unlike the Roman centurions, these men from Gaul and Germany had no loyalty to Rome; they were loyal to their general, and Caesar rewarded them well for it.

Back in Rome, the Senate was fully aware of Caesar's brutal strategies and growing military strength. Keen to ensure that his trial should proceed as smoothly as possible, they reached out to Caesar's old friend Pompey. Their relationship had always been built on the foundation of the latter's marriage to Caesar's daughter Julia, who had died in 54 BCE. Crassus, the third part of the triumvirate, had died while fighting the Parthians in 53, and Pompey was growing ever-more jealous of Caesar's success and popularity. With no ties left to the triumvirate, the Senate understood that Pompey would question his allegiance.

The test came when Pompey was elected as sole consul in 52 BCE to handle an outbreak of rioting and his success gained the approval of the aristocrats. Buoyed by his victory and sudden popularity in the Senate, Pompey was convinced that removing Caesar from the political scene was the right thing to do. It would not be that easy.

At this point, an attack from Gallic chieftain Vercingetorix, who knew of the riots in Rome, nearly destroyed Caesar. The Roman general had laid siege to the chieftain, but was forced to set up a wall to their rear when Gallic reinforcements arrived. The Romans came perilously close to defeat, but, luckily, an extraordinary last-minute counterattack won the day and finally confirmed that Caesar had conquered Gaul.



THE FIRST TRIUMVIRATE

Assembled by Caesar himself, this trio formed the perfect balance of money, military might and political cunning

Julius Caesar

While Crassus gave the triumvirate gold and Pompey gave it military muscle, Caesar brought the political savvy and the ambition. The difficulty of reconciling two men who hated each other so bitterly should not be underestimated, but Caesar convinced them that the rewards he could give them through his consulship would far outweigh any petty rivalry. Once the First Triumvirate was formed, Caesar used brutal tactics to make sure he got what he wanted. The campaign he ran was so dirty that the famously honest Cato was forced to resort to bribery to make sure his son-in-law was elected to co-consul.

Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus

Pompey the Great was a renowned general who had served under Sulla. However, he was chafing under the new regime since they had not fulfilled the promises he had made to his troops in Syria and Judaea. He agreed to lend his muscle to Caesar's campaign in exchange for the guarantee that Caesar would make him a governor once elected. The deal was sealed with the marriage of Pompey to Caesar's daughter Julia and the general's troops began strong-arm and intimidating Caesar's opponents. However, once Caesar went to Gaul, Pompey quickly grew envious of his success and popularity.

Marcus Crassus

Caesar needed financial support to run for consul and Crassus's wealth was notorious. He'd amassed a huge personal fortune through underhanded real-estate dealings, his mining operations, as well as slavery. Crassus was in a position to bankroll Caesar's military operations and to grease the palms of anyone who might be convinced to stand in his way. Once Caesar had convinced Crassus to overlook his long-standing rivalry with Pompey, the First Triumvirate had a bank. He would die fighting the Parthians, who reportedly poured molten gold into his mouth after executing him.

Caesar crosses the Rubicon into Italy, plunging the republic into civil war



In late 50 BCE, preparations were underway for Caesar's return. Both Pompey and Caesar were ordered by the Senate to hand back their powers, but Caesar had no intention of being tried for his crimes and planned to run for consul in absentia. He hoped that the popularity he'd built up during his years at war would push the Senate into allowing it.

Caesar published an account of his wars in Gaul to help remind the public of his many brave and successful military campaigns. *The Gallic Wars* was written using powerful, emotive language that could be read by anyone, not just the well-educated elite. Despite this, the Senate refused and demanded that Caesar hand over command of his armies and return to Rome to face his accusers.

On 10 January 49 BCE, Caesar had run out of options. If he did what the Senate demanded, he would be prosecuted and all his work would be for nothing. On the other hand, if he did not, it was an act of war.

There are reports that Caesar was restless the night before, and even spoke with a spirit. Whatever happened and whatever hesitation he had felt, it was gone by morning. He assembled his forces and took the step that would change the course of history. "The die is cast," he proclaimed, and crossed the Rubicon River from Gaul into northern Italy. After decades of conflict with the Senate, they were finally at war.

In their terror at his military might and daring, the Senate floundered. Caesar faced next to no opposition as he travelled south. Pompey had blithely assumed that an attack wouldn't come until spring and most of his forces were still in Spain. After much panicked deliberating, Pompey announced that he would sail east to Greece to raise an army and that anybody opposing this plan would be a traitor.

When Pompey slipped through his fingers, Caesar called a nearly deserted Senate together to approve military action in Spain. While Pompey fled east, the new dictator wasted

THE BATTLE OF PHARSALUS

Nothing left to lose

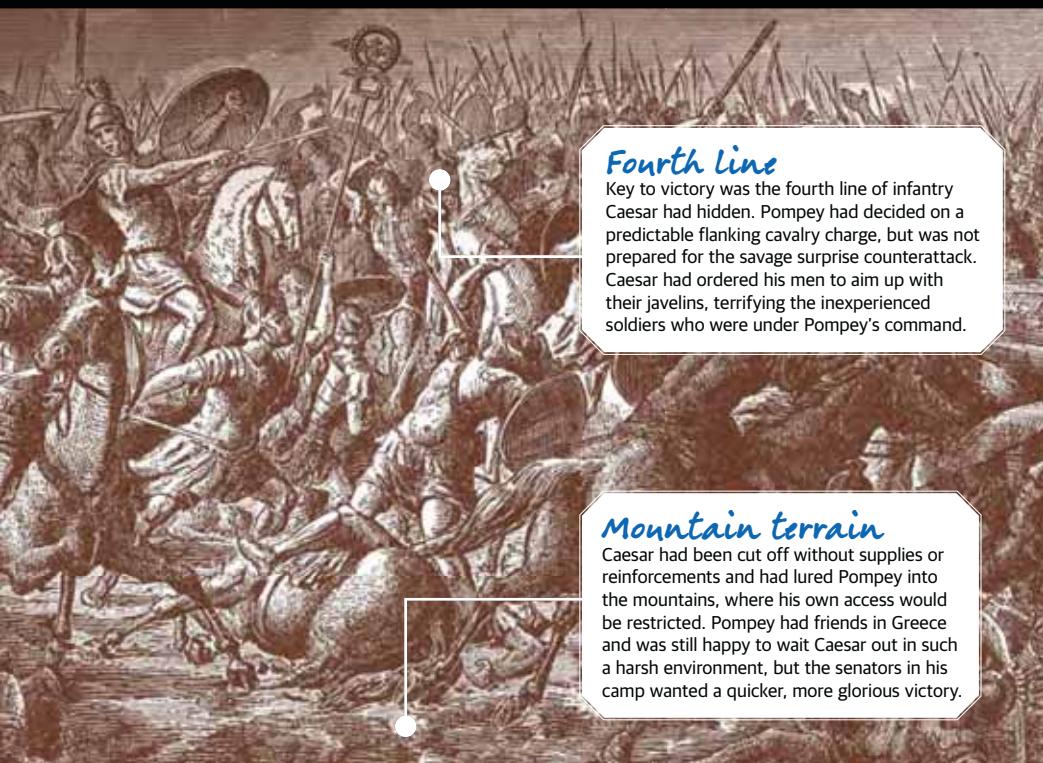
Having been so nearly defeated before, the Battle of Pharsalus was Caesar's last stand. If he were defeated here, the civil war would have ended with Pompey returning to Rome triumphant. Caesar's troops understood this, and their general told them: "Only this one battle remains."

no time cutting a bloody swathe through his troops in the west. Pompey's forces were facing a determined, experienced army and Caesar's campaign was quick and brutal, decimating his opponents in just 27 days. Caesar then turned his attention back to his former ally and pursued him to Greece, where he was in the process of trying to raise another army. Caesar broke through a barricade set up by Bibulus, but he was cut off without supplies or reinforcements.

The subsequent fighting was disastrous, and Caesar and his troops were on their last legs. Pompey had learned from his old friend's tactics in Gaul and set about starving his enemies. Caesar couldn't sit and wait Pompey out; if he was to win, it would have to be on the battlefield. Finally, the two armies met at Pharsalus, where Caesar delivered a decisive victory against overwhelming odds. Once again, Pompey was in the wind.

As Pompey fled south to Egypt, Caesar returned to Rome to pronounce himself dictator, but resigned after just 11 days before picking up the chase once again. However, if he expected a fight, he wasn't going to get one. Pompey had been betrayed by the very people he had sought sanctuary from, and his corpse was presented to Caesar by the child pharaoh Ptolemy XIII as a tribute. They didn't get the reaction they expected; Caesar was reduced to tears and ordered the execution of those who slayed his enemy. The final obstacle to his absolute power had been removed.

"Buoyed by his popularity, Pompey was convinced that removing Caesar from the political scene was the right thing"



Fourth Line

Key to victory was the fourth line of infantry Caesar had hidden. Pompey had decided on a predictable flanking cavalry charge, but was not prepared for the savage surprise counterattack. Caesar had ordered his men to aim up with their javelins, terrifying the inexperienced soldiers who were under Pompey's command.

Mountain terrain

Caesar had been cut off without supplies or reinforcements and had lured Pompey into the mountains, where his own access would be restricted. Pompey had friends in Greece and was still happy to wait Caesar out in such a harsh environment, but the senators in his camp wanted a quicker, more glorious victory.

Separated from his legions in Spain, Pompey had fled to Greece to raise another army. After decimating his old ally's forces in the west, Caesar followed him east.

Unlike Pompey, Caesar had no allies in Greece. He was outnumbered, and reinforcements and supplies had been cut off. It was by sheer force of will that his army managed to keep up their campaign, but Caesar knew he was fast running out of time. He needed an even playing field and marched away from the sea and into the mountains, hoping Pompey would follow.

Pompey, meanwhile, had been buoyed by a major victory over Caesar's forces at Dyrrachium, but he was pained by the fact he could have beaten his enemy once and for all if he had pressed on. Once he caught up near Pharsalus, Pompey attempted to starve Caesar out, while Caesar wanted to coax him into open battle. The two sat at stalemate until Pompey's impatient senators told him they wanted victory now.

Despite holding the higher ground, the better supplies and the far superior numbers, Pompey used a tactic that Caesar knew all too well. While attempting to outflank Caesar's forces, Pompey did not see that his opponent had created a hidden fourth line of infantry. The flanking cavalry charged but did not anticipate the savage counterattack that followed. As instructed, Caesar's troops stabbed up at the cavalry with their javelins, terrifying Pompey's young aristocratic commanders who were unused to such a fierce tactic. The cavalry retreated and this fourth line gave chase, followed by the fresh third line. Pompey's forces were crushed and the general himself fled to Egypt. The decisive battle of the Caesar's Civil War had been won.

Looking out on the Nile, Caesar was able to see what such power could mean. He fell for Cleopatra after she reportedly smuggled herself into his rooms wrapped in a carpet and, acting out of sympathy for her and his own anger about the execution of Pompey, he fought with her against her brother Ptolemy in the Egyptian Civil War. The fighting that ensued was known as the Siege of Alexandria, during which Ptolemy refused Caesar's offers of peace and paid the ultimate price, drowning during the Battle of the Nile.

The Egyptian queen claimed to have had a son named Caesarion with her lover, but he would never acknowledge that the boy was his. Once Cleopatra was firmly established on the throne of Egypt, Caesar sailed to Asia Minor to quash a rebellion led by Pharnaces. His victory was so swift that it led to his famous boast: "Veni, vidi, vici." The words "I came, I saw, I conquered" weren't specific to just this single, individual battle. Caesar truly was unstoppable.

Even as he celebrated victory, Caesar knew he had spent too long abroad and needed to establish and maintain his power in Rome. It was vital that power be absolute, but gave the appearance of not being so. He was elected as Rome's dictator in 48 BCE for a term of one year,

Pompey and Caesar were not always rivals – in fact, Pompey even married Caesar's daughter, Julia, in 59 BCE

and he spent this time mopping up the final resistance to his rule, including Pompey's sons in Spain and the elusive Cato in Utica, Tunisia. The hunt for the latter would take Caesar to North Africa, where he would defeat the troops of Scipio and offer them no mercy. In a final act of defiance, Cato took his own life rather than face Caesar's sole rule.

The Senate rewarded Caesar's triumphs by appointing him dictator for ten years. With Pompey's supporters disposed of, Caesar returned to Rome to reform the state. His plan was threefold. He needed to ensure that there was no military resistance to him; he needed to deal with the serious debt that Rome had accumulated during its years at war; and he needed to turn Roman territory from a collection of states into one unified nation.

Between 48 BCE and his assassination in 44, Caesar would show himself to be far more than a military dictator, not only laying the foundations for but taking the first decisive steps towards the Roman Empire. The 60-odd men who conspired against and assassinated him in the Senate on 15 March 44 BCE may have succeeded in their task, but Caesar's legacy had long since been assured.

CAESAR THE DICTATOR

Throughout his regime, Caesar had used the approval of the people to his advantage. When he returned to Rome having defeated Pompey, he knew it was crucial to keep the people onside. Mistakes were made along the way, though. When he celebrated his win over Pompey's son in Spain, it was seen as a serious faux pas as such festivities were reserved for victories over foreign foes, not the sons of former consuls.

His political reforms, however, addressed some of the major concerns many had aired. He understood that if Rome was to truly be an empire, it could no longer hold back the benefits of living under Roman rule from those living outside Italy. With this in mind, he opened up citizenship to those living in Gaul, and encouraged people to relocate to territories outside Italy. He reduced debt and he ensured that soldiers who had fought for him would have land to settle on. He also introduced the new calendar, aligning the months with the solar year rather than the Moon.

To ensure opposition against him in the Senate was minimal, Caesar expanded their ranks. Each position was now open to more candidates, making the aristocratic elite that opposed him less of a majority. Although he wore the purple robes of a king, sat on a throne in the Senate and had his face on the empire's coins, Caesar was careful to keep up appearances that he was a duly elected official. The ease with which his loyal general Mark Antony was able to step into power and pursue those who had assassinated Caesar shows the level of popularity the late ruler had maintained during his years as Rome's dictator.

Bluffer's guide

EUROPE, 133 – 27 BCE

The Fall of the Roman Republic



TIMELINE

133 BCE



The murder of tribune Tiberius Gracchus sparks a chain of events that ultimately leads to the downfall of the Roman Republic.

107 BCE



General Gaius Marius becomes consul and abolishes the requirement to own property before being able to join the army.

1 NOVEMBER 82 BCE



Following his rebellion, Sulla defeats the remnants of Marius' supporters at the Battle of the Colline Gate to secure power.

17 MARCH 45 BCE



Caesar's decisive victory in Munda, Spain, ends the civil war and enables him to install himself as ruler of Rome.

The Fall of the Roman Republic



Julius Caesar was never an emperor. Instead, he installed himself as 'dictator in perpetuum' just prior to his assassination in 44 BCE

The naval Battle of Actium between Mark Antony and Caesar's heir Octavian decided the fate of the Roman Republic

15 MARCH 44 BCE



Julius Caesar, having recently proclaimed himself dictator for life, is stabbed to death by a host of senators.

16 JANUARY 27 BCE



Caesar's heir becomes Emperor Caesar Augustus of Rome, having dispatched Mark Antony's forces four years earlier in the Final War of the Roman Republic.



What was it?

After centuries of peace and prosperity, aided by almost untrammeled expansion across the Mediterranean, the Roman Republic was plunged into crisis in 133 BCE following the murder of popular official Tiberius Gracchus, a killing allegedly sanctioned by the Senate. The following years were marked by social unrest as politicians battled it out. General Gaius Marius, a successful military campaigner, seized the office of consul in 107 BCE.

In 88 BCE, following a challenge for power from Lucius Sulla, Marius' quaestor (state treasurer), who subsequently rebelled against Rome, a reign of terror ensued that purged many of the people's representatives.

Sulla died in 78 BCE only to be replaced by Gnaeus Pompeius, better known as Pompey the Great, who would later serve in Rome's First Triumvirate alongside Marcus Crassus and Julius Caesar.

Pompey and Caesar quickly became entrenched in their respective positions, leading to a series of civil wars that would culminate in Octavian (Caesar's adopted heir) becoming the first emperor of Rome in 27 BCE, heralding the end of the Republic.



What were the consequences?

The fall of the Roman Republic witnessed the decline of a democratic system that had governed the state since its foundation in 509 BCE following the overthrow of the hated Roman monarchy.

After the disposal of the kings, the title of consul was introduced and shared between two men. More power was also granted to the senate, and tribunes (officials) were elected to represent the people. However, this style of governance was changed by the Republic's demise.

The social unrest and military opportunism that blighted Rome in the last century BCE and led to Julius Caesar eventually snatching power effectively put an end to a system of rule that had heeded the requests of the people. And while Caesar's rapacious ambition would lead to his downfall, his heir, Octavian, swiftly picked up the mantle to establish total power as emperor in 27 BCE. An emperor would rule Rome until 476 CE.



Who was involved?



Lucius Sulla

139 – 78 BCE

Upon consolidating power in 82 BCE, Sulla ruled as a dictator, purging many elected officials and stripping others of power.



Julius Caesar

100 – 44 BCE

After crushing the remains of Pompey's men at the Battle of Munda, Caesar took control of Rome, eventually becoming dictator.



Emperor Augustus

63 BCE – 14 CE

Victory over Mark Antony at Actium allowed Octavian to cement his grip on power and later become the first emperor of Rome.

THE ROMAN EMPIRE 27 BCE - 476 CE

Roman conquest of Britain

43 CE

Prior to Emperor Claudius' campaign to conquer Britannia once and for all, the Romans have enjoyed a relatively healthy trading relationship with the tribes of Britain since Julius Caesar's first settlements in 55 BCE. However, the Catuvellauni have taken over from the Trinovantes as the most powerful kingdom in southeastern Britain. The Catuvellauni begin encroaching on the land of the Roman loyal Atrebates, forcing Rome to send troops to pacify Britannia once and for all. The campaign eventually takes the Romans through England and into Scotland.

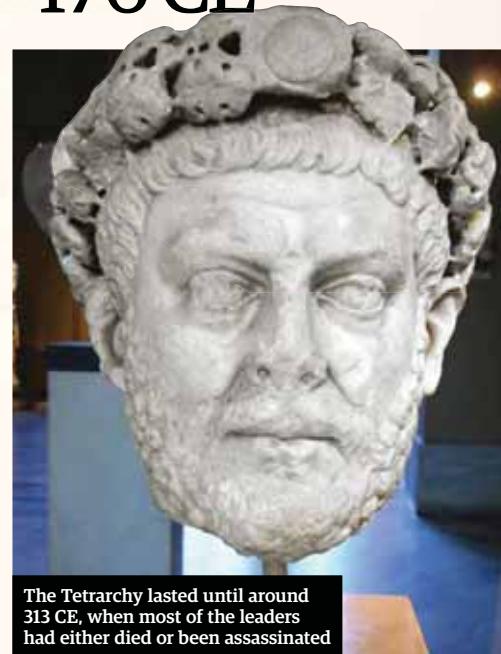


Britain provided considerable resources for the empire, but it was a difficult province to control

Diocletian established the Tetrarchy

293 CE

Following almost 50 years of chaos, civil war and divided states, the politician Diocletian is recognised as emperor by the Senate and establishes a new form of governance - the Tetrarchy. Alongside three other co-emperors, Diocletian divides the Roman Empire into four separate states to be governed by each individual emperor with mutual cooperation between all four sections of the realm. The concept, for a time, proves a success, with every state having its own capital and standing armies. However, despite the joint nature of the nation, Diocletian is ultimately the supreme leader.



The Tetrarchy lasted until around 313 CE, when most of the leaders had either died or been assassinated

Senate grants Augustus new titles

As part of Octavian's new position as the ultimate ruler of Rome, the Senate grants him the titles of Augustus, Majestic and also princeps.
27 BCE

Colosseum is completed

In 80 BCE, the largest amphitheatre ever built is finally finished in the heart of Rome. It can house 50,000 spectators and becomes a symbol of Rome's endless passion for bloodsports.
80 CE



Battle of Carthage

Forces loyal to the joint emperors Gordian I and his son Gordian II are destroyed by those belonging to Emperor Maximinus Thrax. Gordian I is killed and Gordian II soon commits suicide.
238 CE

27 BCE

43 CE

60 CE

64 CE

80 CE

122 CE

165 CE

235 CE

238 CE

Boudicca's revolt in Britannia

One of the biggest revolts in Roman Britain is led by the queen of the Iceni, Boudicca. She leads a force of 100,000 men but is ultimately defeated.
60 CE

Great Fire of Rome

Legend says that the fire that consumed a significant proportion of Rome's infrastructure was in fact set by Emperor Nero himself. Nero blames the Christians, leading to a bloody purge.
64 CE

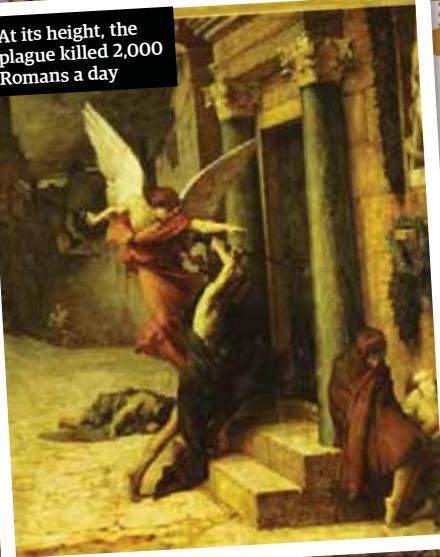
Hadrian's Wall is started

In order to keep the barbarians of Scotland and the north of Britannia at bay, Emperor Hadrian orders a wall to be constructed. It becomes known as Hadrian's Wall and survives to this day.
122 CE

Crisis of the Third Century

The Crisis of the Third Century is a half-century-long period of civil war and turmoil as 26 different emperors are crowned and Rome splits into three different states.
235 CE

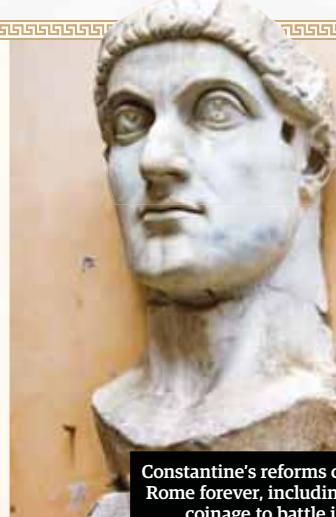
At its height, the plague killed 2,000 Romans a day



The Antonine Plague strikes

165 CE

One of the worst pandemics to ever ravage Rome, the Antonine Plague (likely a form of smallpox or perhaps an early form of measles) ends up claiming the lives of over 5 million Romans. It is thought the plague was brought back with troops returning from the Near East. The plague, which rages on and off for around 15 years, even claims the life of the emperor Lucius Verus.



Constantine's reforms changed Rome forever, including a new coinage to battle inflation

Constantine becomes first Christian emperor

306 CE

Christians had an uneasy relationship with the religion of Rome. In fact, as recently as Diocletian, the Christian community had been demonised and purged. However, that all changes when Constantine - the son of one of the first members of the Tetrarchy - becomes the sole emperor. He sets about reforming the national mindset and even chairs the First Council of Nicaea in 325 CE, where an assembly of bishops is called to create a consensus of modern Christianity.



For a time, the governance of the Western Roman Empire fell to regent Stilicho before his ineptitude at the task led him to arrest and execution in 408 CE

Rome is divided into two empires

395 CE

A direct result of Constantine's desire to rule the Roman Empire from the east in Byzantium, it is decided that the realm should be operated by the two imperial administrations. The empire is initially divided by Theodosius I upon his deathbed, who carves it into the Western Roman Empire and the Eastern Roman Empire, and grants rule to his two sons. As a result, Arcadius becomes Augustus of the eastern Byzantine Empire and his brother Honorius becomes emperor of the Western Empire. To the Romans, the country is far from divided - instead, the notion of two separate governments looking after one country is seen as the norm.



● Visigoths sack Rome

Visigoths sack Rome
For the first time in 800 years, Rome is successfully overrun by an enemy. The city is sacked and almost burned to the ground by the Visigoths, led by their king, Alaric.

260 CE **293 CE** **306 CE** **330 CE** **395 CE** **410 CE** **476 CE**

Emperor Valerian taken prisoner

In a shock development for the Roman Empire, the emperor Valerian is taken captive during a battle with the Sassanid Persian Empire. He dies in captivity.

260 CE

 Capital moved from Rome to
Constantinople

Constantinople
As part of Constantine the Great's systematic upheaval of Roman values, he abandons Rome and sets up his new capital, Constantinople, in modern-day Istanbul.

330 CE

"The notion of two separate governments looking after one country is seen as the norm"



Rome's history came full circle, with the monarchy re-established as the traditional empire fell away

Western Roman Empire falls

426 CE

By the middle of the 5th century, the Western Roman Empire is a shadow of its former self. The position of emperor no longer yields the power and respect it once did, and the West lacks the stability of the Byzantine Empire to the east. The current emperor, Romulus Augustulus, has been installed by his father a year prior but doesn't have the support of the people or the Senate. This leads to the military commander Odoacer leading a revolt that removes the emperor and his installation as patrician. With the support of the Senate, he is the first king of Italy.



The Dynasties of the Roman Empire

THE JULIO-CLAUDIAN DYNASTY

The first five emperors of Rome began with Augustus, and it was through him that the Principate model of governance (where both Senate and emperor exist, but the Senate ultimately answers to the most powerful man in the realm) was made. Many of these men had no natural heirs so most used adoption to select their eventual successor and continue the dynasty. From Augustus to Nero, it was a divisive time for the Romans. Political infighting and favouritism saw the persecution of certain families considered rivals to the dynasty with even the Senate itself attempting to regain power at one point. Rome even burned in 64 CE.



AUGUSTUS
27 BCE - 14 CE

Rome was now plunged into a year of civil war where four men would rise to the title of emperor - Galba, Otho, Vitellius and Vespasian

GALBA
68-69 CE

When Vespasian eventually becomes emperor, he helps bring the civil unrest to a close

YEAR OF THE FOUR EMPERORS
68-69 CE

Following Nero's suicide, Rome is plunged into civil war as rival families aim to install their own candidates as emperor. Before the rise of the Flavians, three men rule: Galba, Otho and Vitellius.



TIBERIUS
14-27 CE

FLAVIAN DYNASTY
69-96 CE

Rome was now plunged into a year of civil war where four men would rise to the title of emperor - Galba, Otho, Vitellius and Vespasian

VESPASIAN
69-79 CE

MARCUS AURELIUS
161-180 CE



TITUS
79-81 CE

THE NERVA-ANTONINE DYNASTY
96-192 CE

Vespasian's second son (and the third Flavian emperor) Domitian was assassinated in 96 CE, and long-time supporter Nerva took his place

SEPTIMIUS SEVERUS
193-211 CE

COMMODUS
177-192 CE

Rome yet again found itself in a power struggle between a number of influential figures, and a year of murder and deceit would follow

YEAR OF THE FIVE EMPERORS
193 CE

Following Commodus' assassination, his Praetorian Guard would eventually go on to murder his successor, Pertinax, within three months. Didius Julianus succeeded him, but was executed by Septimius Severus. Severus would co-rule while fighting a civil war against another claimant.



ELAGABALUS
218-222 CE

PERTINAX
193 CE

Severus Alexander was the last of the line, and while he started off popular, he soon became a figure of derision as a series of military faux pas left him with his own men's swords in his back

SEVERAN DYNASTY
193-235 CE

The final dynasty of Principate did see the end of the civil war, but it also saw the empire's seat of power shaken by political infighting and turmoil that would foreshadow the crisis to come.

SEVERUS ALEXANDER
222-235 CE

The Dynasties of the Roman Empire

CRISIS OF THE THIRD CENTURY

235-284 CE

With the final emperor of the Principate dead in Severus Alexander, and murdered by his generals at that, Rome and the empire were plunged into its most bloody, internal conflict yet. The Crisis of the Third Century, or the Imperial Crisis, raged for almost half a century and saw 26 individual men recognised by the Senate as Caesar (thus making them official emperors). The conflict was so severe it saw the empire become divided into three warring states: the Ptolemaic Empire (including Roman Egypt and Roman Syria), the Gallic Empire (which consisted of Gaul and Britannia) and the remaining Roman Empire in Between.



AURELIAN
270-275 CE

No one emperor had true control in this period until Aurelian, who united all three empires and effectively ended the Crisis of the Third Century.

THE TETRARCHY

284-313 CE

The end of the Crisis saw a new style of rule where power was divided equally among four men - Diocletian, Galerius, Maximian and Constantius Chlorus. Each one ruled a different section of the empire.



DIOCLETIAN
284-305 CE

After 20 years of rule, Diocletian and Maximian abdicate and two more men are made co-caesars. This eventually breaks down, civil war ensues and Chlorus' son, Constantine emerges the victor.



CONSTANTINE THE GREAT
306-337 CE

THE CONSTANTINIAN DYNASTY

306-363 CE

The Constantian dynasty saw the first true beginning of the Dominate or 'despot' era, where the concept of a singular powerful rule was dropped and a great deal more power consolidated in the position of emperor, and a series of military and religious upheavals that changed the realm forever. The Constantine line (sometimes known as the Neo-Flavian line, due to each member carrying that name, too) actually began with Constantius Chlorus during the Tetrarchy, but it wouldn't be until the ascension of his son Constantine the Great when Rome (still divided into an Eastern and Western realm) was united.



LICINIUS I
308-324 CE

The Constantine line lasts until 364 CE when Jovian, the last of the emperors of that line, dies of natural causes. The army names his replacement.



VALENTINIAN I
364-375 CE

THE VALENTINIAN DYNASTY

364-392 CE

The Valentinian dynasty saw a Tetrarchy-esque rule as Rome was purposely divided into Eastern and Western sections to be ruled by a pair of co-rulers. The decision would fragment the Empire forever.



THE THEODOSIAN DYNASTY

379-457 CE

One of the last families to rule the empire in its twilight years, one which initially ruled in the Eastern Roman Empire, but also one that briefly reunited the two sections under one family in 394 CE.



ANTHEMIUS
467-472 CE

THE LAST EMPERORS OF THE WESTERN ROMAN EMPIRE

457-518 CE

As the Eastern Roman Empire (an entity that, in one form or another, endured until the 15th century under Eastern rulers) fell into Byzantine hands, the Western Roman Empire became a hodge podge of self-proclaimed emperors and assassinations. It was the great cream of Rome at its worst, the very fabric of Roman society coming apart at the seams as rich and powerful men with no mind to rule sought the hollow shell of Caesarhood. The Western Roman Empire didn't go out with a blaze of glory, but petered out into nothing as the last of its claimants died or were murdered.

We can see this as the effective end of the Western Roman Empire.



JULIUS NEPOS
474-475 CE

Empire State of Mind

As the Republic burned
around him, one man would
change Rome's fate forever

Words Katharine Marsh



The battle was won. Mark Antony and Cleopatra retreated to Egypt, where they committed suicide. Lepidus (a general who had sided with Antony) was long gone. Rome still needed a leader, and there was only one candidate. Octavian was the undisputed ruler - he'd made sure of it.

But what do you do when your land is crumbling? The first thing is to eliminate any competition. Caesar's only biological son, Caeserion, was still alive and ruling over Egypt as Ptolemy XV Caesar. Not for long; his execution was ordered in 30 BCE. Now Octavian had a republic to rebuild.

Octavian knew exactly what he was doing. Roman politics were dangerous on a good day - Caesar wasn't the first to get himself killed - so care had to be taken. He had to restore the Roman Republic - or at least make it look like that's what he was doing. One person having all the power was never going to go over well; it stank of the old Roman kings who were only remembered for their corruption.

The plan worked. Octavian was named a consul when he re-entered Rome after Actium. Bit by bit, he won over the Senate and began bringing stability back to the republic. His tenure as consul didn't end as he passed laws that seemed to reflect the old traditions. He undertook building projects to restore Rome to its former glory. He even named himself

"Over time, while the facade slipped away, citizens and patricians either didn't notice or didn't care"

imperator (commander-in-chief). It was from this that the English language would later derive 'emperor'. At the time, he was perhaps better known as the princeps, or first citizen.

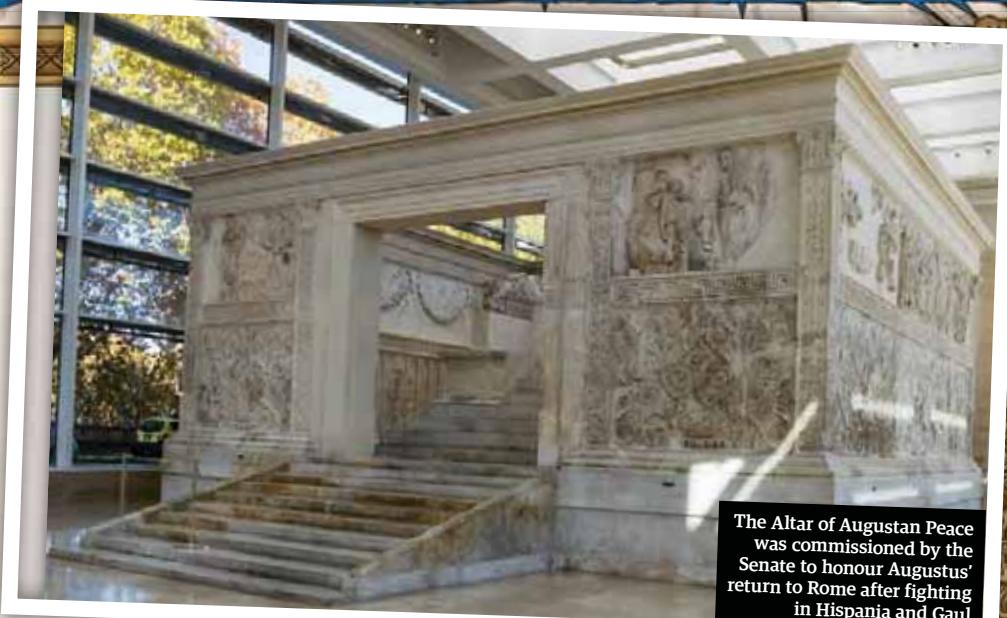
In 27 BCE, Octavian was bestowed a new name by the Senate: Augustus. He was rewarded for restoring the republic - something he definitely wasn't doing - and he would remain a consul for four more years. He initially turned down his new title, knowing full well the Senate would insist on giving him the honour. During the same year, he was also given a ten-year tenure of Spain, Gaul and Syria. With those regions came the majority of the Roman army, and his power meant he could influence the appointments of the other provinces' proconsuls.

Augustus was loved by all and he continued to uphold republican values. Over time, while the facade slipped away, citizens and patricians either didn't notice or didn't care. In 19 BCE, Augustus was given supreme power of every Roman province; the empire was born.

The first emperor was given the power of a tribune for life, meaning he could now convene the Senate when he wanted to. But the role brought more clout with it than that; this role was usually annually elected and its holder considered the defender of the plebeians. Augustus now had the lower classes on his side.

Keeping hold of an empire after such a turbulent time wasn't straightforward, but Augustus made it seem easy. Peace was restored and, unusually for Ancient Rome, maintained. That doesn't mean that there was no war (this was Rome, after all), but the infighting was halted. Pagan tribes in the Alps were attacked and Galatia in Asia Minor was annexed. Rome's boundaries were expanding, and they wouldn't begin to slow down until Emperor Trajan's death in 117 CE.

The arts flourished. The emperor was a patron to Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Livy and more and he used literature to show his patriotic side. Virgil's *Aeneid* would paint Augustus as a direct descendant of Aeneas, a legendary founder of Rome whose mother was the goddess Aphrodite. His connections to the gods were boosted tenfold following the deification of Julius Caesar. Now he was the son of a god, too.



The Altar of Augustan Peace was commissioned by the Senate to honour Augustus' return to Rome after fighting in Hispania and Gaul

Virgil reads the *Aeneid* to Augustus and his sister Octavia in this 18th-century painting by Jean-Joseph Tailllasson



But if the republic was truly to be over, Augustus needed an heir. He couldn't live forever, although he did manage to rule for a good 40 years. But the succession was always going to be a problem - he only had a daughter, Julia. He looked to his nephew Marcellus, but he died in 23 BCE. Then he considered his grandsons Gaius and Lucius Caesar, adopting them as his own children and starting their political careers. They both died in the early 1st century CE. There were only two options left:

his stepsons, Drusus and Tiberius. When Drusus died in 9 CE, only one man remained.

On Augustus' death in 14 CE, Rome wept. Tiberius ascended to the role of emperor and the line of Caesar was secure. Rome was no longer a republic. The first emperor allegedly claimed on his deathbed that he'd found Rome a city of clay but left it a city of marble, but he left behind more than that. He bequeathed to the world a legacy of a marble empire and the start of a new chapter of history.

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ANCIENT ROMAN RELIGION



The Romans ruled an empire but were ruled by a pantheon of gods who controlled every aspect of their lives

 Words Ben Gazur 



The Roman mind was an odd one; hard-nosed pragmatism was meshed with deeply held superstition. While the legions of the empire marched across the world, people felt that the might of Rome was supported not so much by their fearsome military prowess, but by the gods. It is impossible to understand Rome without knowledge of their faith.

The foundational myth of Rome shows the importance they placed on divine signs. When Romulus and Remus wanted to found a city, they marked out the sky and waited for the gods to send them a message. Remus saw six eagles, but Romulus saw a full dozen, and that is why we study 'Roman' paganism and not 'Reman'.

The gods worshipped by the Romans were all clearly and closely related to the deities of the Greek world. Zeus the Father of the Greeks morphed into Jupiter of the Romans while maintaining his role as king of heaven. There is some evidence that both Zeus and Jupiter developed from earlier Proto-Indo-European gods, but others were absorbed into the pantheon within historical memory.

Italy was once home to many colonies sent out by Greek city-states. These held on to the

gods of the cities that had founded them. As Rome expanded its influence by conquest, these cities entered into the Roman world and their gods became the gods of Rome. Diana, Minerva, Venus and Hercules are all thought to have become Roman deities in this way.

Before these additions had been made, Roman paganism was influenced by the Etruscans, who pre-dated Rome and controlled a large area of land bordering Rome in the 9th-6th centuries BCE. By the time Rome absorbed the final Etruscan cities, it had long before taken up many of their religious practices. The Etruscans studied nature for signs of the gods' instructions; haruspices were priests who used the entrails of sacrificial animals to read the will of heaven. The practically minded Romans would continue to use this method to predict auguries of the future for centuries to come.

Roman paganism in its purest form of around 100 BCE was already, therefore, a religion of borrowings. While there were proud noble families who looked down on 'foreign' faiths, even the haughtiest would have had to admit that gods had long been imported to the city. In 217 BCE, Italy was being ravaged by Hannibal and his army. Against the warnings of priests, the Romans met Hannibal in battle at Lake



The Romans had 12 major gods but came to recognise many hundreds of minor and foreign deities as powers

MITHRAS

At sites across the Roman Empire, strange monuments have been found underground. In domed caves, statues depict a young man in the act of slaying a bull. Known as the Tauroctony, these sculptures are the remains of the cult of a god called Mithras.

Mithraism was just one of many 'mystery cults' that flourished during the Roman Empire. These cults were often foreign imports that offered followers access to secrets hidden from outsiders, and some promised to reveal the secrets of the afterlife. We know very little of what the followers of Mithras believed, but some clues have been found in his temples.

Mithras is sometimes shown as being born from a rock, dining with the god Sol, or with a lion-headed figure surrounded by snakes. The central image of the temple is always the bull slaying, but nothing is known of the meaning of the act. We do know that Mithras worshippers called themselves 'syndexioi' – those who shake hands. Perhaps the secret of Mithras was in the bonds formed between followers. The cult was popular among soldiers and persisted until the 4th century CE when it was suppressed as a rival faith to Christianity.



The tauroctony (bull slaying) was the focus of worship in Mithraism and echoed the tradition of animal sacrifice found in mainstream Roman paganism

Trasimene and they suffered one of the worst defeats in history. Clearly the gods had not been on the side of Rome. Consulting the sacred Sibylline Texts, it was decided that Rome would have to bring Venus of Eryx, a city on Sicily, to the capital. The Romans offered this goddess a huge bribe and a temple in the heart of the city if only she would relocate. The image of the goddess was transferred to Rome and the worship of Venus Erycina inaugurated. Rome went on to defeat Hannibal.

Prayer for a Roman was not a quiet act of contemplation allowing communion between the worshipper and the worshipped. Roman religion was performative. Worship was loud, colourful and smelly. A temple was the scene of chanting, gaudily painted images of the gods, and the bloody sacrifice of animals. For the gods to be propitiated, they had to be seen to be offered something good.

There is some evidence that human sacrifice may once have played a role in Roman paganism. In one legend, after an earthquake opened a chasm in the forum of Rome it was feared that the gods were displeased. The city was told to offer its most precious item to the pit

to placate the gods. Marcus Curtius put on his battle armour, mounted his horse and leapt into the hole, declaring that bravery was the most valuable possession of the Romans. The chasm closed over him and Rome was saved. Some believe that gladiatorial battles were originally funerary rites with the dead fighters as offerings to the deceased.

If humans were once offered to the gods, by the time of the Roman Empire it was animals that took up the burden of placating them. Sheep, pigs and cows were often slaughtered. The victim was supposed to be willingly killed, so attempts were made to keep it calm before a priest stunned it with a hammer and slit its throat. After the sacrifice, feasts were held at which the gods, in the form of their sacred images, would have been present. A portion of the sacrificial beast was burned so that the gods could enjoy their offering through the smoke while their followers feasted.

Sacrifices could be small affairs to bless a family or huge offerings to save the city. In order to survive in the war against Hannibal, Rome offered Jupiter every single animal born that spring. For those unable to afford a bull, it

"Prayer for a Roman was not a quiet act of contemplation"



was also appropriate to give the gods a drink of wine, bunch of grapes or honey cake. Not all the services of the gods were large enough to require a whole ceremony.

In a polytheist pantheon there is always room for another deity. Within a Roman home there would be a small shrine to those gods that were specially honoured within the household: the lares familiares and di penates. The latter took care of the family who owned the home. Every time they dined, a small portion would be offered to a fire to include the penate in the meal. The lares familiares, meanwhile, were responsible not only for the family but for everyone, including slaves, who lived within the house.

Some found the profusion of deities bemusing. Saint Augustine, a hostile witness on Roman paganism, mocked the littleness of some Roman gods. He records how Cardea watched hinges, Forculus guarded doors, and Limentinus was responsible for thresholds. Augustine wondered how it could be that one human guard was enough to watch a doorway when three gods were required. In more vital areas like the harvesting of corn, he lists ten gods who have a role in the various stages of the crop's development and growth.

Paganism's ability to add new gods offered Roman emperors a unique political opportunity.



Animals were messengers between humans and the divine and feature in heavily in Roman myth, like the wolf that fed Romulus and Remus

Romans were used to worshipping figures that had once been mortal. Romulus himself is said to have mysteriously disappeared into heaven. It was even accepted that some people had divine ancestry. Aeneas, founder of Rome, was the son of Venus, and through him Julius Caesar was able to claim that he was the descendent of a goddess. Caesar was honoured by some as a living god, and a house built for him at the republic's expense was shaped like a temple. Statues were set up to Caesar as a divinity. Unfortunately Julius' flesh was not as impervious to daggers as his statues.

When Caesar was murdered, he was officially declared a god. This allowed his adopted son, Octavian, now Augustus, to call himself Divi Filius - Son of God. Augustus itself was a name he chose for its religious associations. He allowed citizens outside Italy to build temples in his honour but, perhaps remembering the fate of his uncle, forbade it at Rome. When sailors from Alexandria offered him divine honours he was pleased. They claimed it was through him that they were able to sail the seas in peace, trade, and had liberty. This is the practical Roman definition of a deity - a being able to render aid to worshippers. Augustus was therefore a god worth worshipping.

On Augustus' death, a senator saw an eagle rise from the funeral pyre and so it was decided the emperor would be honoured in Rome, too. Many of his successors as emperor followed him into the sky as they died. Emperor Vespasian

even mocked the Imperial Cult on his deathbed. "Alas," he said, "I fear I am becoming a god."

The fall of paganism in Rome was tied to the imperial family. Constantine was the first emperor to make Christianity legal in the empire, and over time, pagan symbols, including the statue of Victory in the Senate house, were removed.

Emperor Julian (remembered by Christians today as Julian the Apostate) was the last pagan emperor of Rome, coming to the purple after the rise of Christianity. But despite his efforts to restore the worship of Rome's older gods alongside the newer faiths, his short reign was unable to bring back religious toleration. After his death in battle, supposedly saying "You have won, Galilean," the Roman world became ever more, and finally exclusively Christian.



Rome's Big Twelve Gods

Meet the gods and goddesses worshipped, revered and feared by the Ancient Romans

Words Katharine Marsh

JUNO

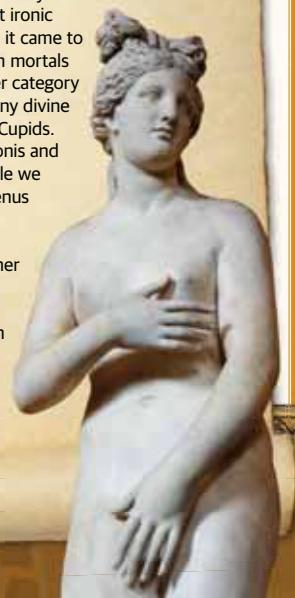
MORE THAN JUST JUPITER'S WIFE

If you were a woman in Ancient Rome, especially a married one, Juno was your goddess as she kept an eye over all aspects of women's lives. She even enjoyed her own festival, the Matronalia, on 1 March each year during which husbands gave gifts to their wives during a time of renewal and the reawakening of nature. In one of her many guises, Juno was also tasked with overseeing childbirth as Juno Lucina, and a temple was dedicated to this version of her on the Esquiline Hill. Juno has the privilege of being one of the oldest Roman gods as one of the three originals - the Capitoline Triad - alongside her brother and husband Jupiter, and Minerva, all three of whom were adopted into the Roman pantheon from the Etruscans. As the centuries went by, her status grew ever larger and her cult expanded until she was recognised as the principal female divinity of the state, rightfully sitting alongside Jupiter.

VENUS

LOVE AND MOTHERHOOD FELL UNDER THE DOMAIN OF CUPID'S MOTHER

When Saturn castrated his father and his blood fell into the sea, a new goddess rose from the sea foam: Venus. As she was the deity in charge of love, sex, beauty, fertility and prostitution, it seems like a somewhat ironic birth. Venus didn't discriminate when it came to sexual partners - she would take both mortals and immortals as lovers. In the former category fell Vulcan and Mars, and she had many divine children with the latter including the Cupids. Her mortal lovers were Anchises, Adonis and the Sicilian king Butes. The first temple we know about that was dedicated to Venus was on the Aventine Hill in 295 BCE, and her reputation only grew with temples dedicated to Venus the Mother and the Changer of Hearts appearing over time. The Romans didn't skimp on festivals in her honour, either, with Veneralia and Vinalia Urbana both being held in April, followed by Vinalia Rustica in August and Venus Genetrix in September.



JUPITER

THE ONE WHO REIGNED SUPREME

Above the multitude of other gods and goddesses in the Ancient Roman pantheon sat the mighty Jupiter. With his grand throne and eagle-topped sceptre, he was the man in charge, the deity who watched over every single Roman citizen. Jupiter's domain was the sky and everything that went with it, blowing the clouds away on an overcast day or smiting those who wronged him with crashing thunderbolts. His grandest temple sat on the Capitoline Hill and was dedicated to Jupiter Optimus Maximus - the best and greatest. It was here that generals and emperors would parade to during their triumphs to display their spoils from their campaigns. While he was a regal being, he was also known for his sexual transgressions, despite his marriage to his sister Juno. He managed to find his way into the beds of many a mortal woman, often fathering children like Hercules, Mercury, Bacchus and more.



MINERVA

WAR WASN'T JUST A MAN'S GAME

One of the Capitoline Triad, Minerva was the goddess of many aspects of Roman life: wisdom, medicine, commerce, poetry, the arts, handicrafts and war. However, that last facet of her divinity was one that appeared over time, causing her to encroach upon Mars' domain ever more frequently. In fact, she eventually took over the Quindecimviral festival, a five-day celebration that signalled the start of the army's campaign season, from her half-brother. As well as war, Minerva would build a reputation throughout the Roman Republic as a deity of victory, and Pompey dedicated a temple to her after his successful campaigns in the east.

Minerva boasted a shrine on Rome's Aventine Hill, built in 263 or 262 BCE, which became a meeting place for guilds of craftsmen in the city. There was also another shrine dedicated to her on the Caelian Hill, and a temple was built in her name in the Nervae Forum by the emperor Domitian, who claimed that the goddess was protecting him.

NEPTUNE

A FISHERMAN'S FRIEND WATCHING OVER THE SEAS

In the ancient Mediterranean, the sea provided the fastest mode of transport - making sacrifices to its deity was of utmost importance. For the Romans, this happened to be Neptune, brother of Jupiter and Pluto. Originally known as the god of freshwater rivers, lakes and streams, after the adoption of the Greek pantheon in the 4th-3rd centuries BCE he became inextricably intertwined with his Grecian counterpart, Poseidon. He even took on the three-pronged trident and often appeared with the dolphins that had once been associated with Poseidon.

Neptune also enjoyed his own festival each summer, Neptunalia, which was marked with games. However, not much else is known about the event. The god was also worshipped across Rome's vast territories. Married to a sea nymph by the name of Amphitrite, Neptune had a son, Triton, who was half man, half fish. He was also the father of Pegasus, the infamous winged horse.

MARS

THE PROTECTOR AND WARRIOR WHO LOOKED AFTER ROME

In a civilisation built through battle and conquest, a god of war was always going to sit high in the pantheon - Mars was second only to Jupiter. Often modelled on his Greek counterpart, Ares, Mars did have some more Roman attributes that separated him from the Greek god; namely that he was more levelheaded, and more virtuous. Considered by some to be the father of the twins Romulus and Remus, Mars was often looked at as the protector of Rome and the Roman way of life, defending the

Eternal City's borders and keeping the enemy at bay. Festivals in his honour were held in March, which was named 'Martius' after him, and October, two months that bookended the Roman military season. March would see Equus, which ensured that horses would be well when on campaign, along with Feriae Marti, Agonium Martiale and Tubilustrium. October played host to the Aramilustrium festival on the Aventine, which saw weapons be purified before they were stored away for the winter.

DIANA

**IF YOU GO OUT TO THE WOODS,
YOU'RE PROBABLY PRAYING
TO DIANA**

There's a chance that she was an Italic woodland deity before the influence of the Greek pantheon, but the Roman Diana became inextricably linked with Artemis fairly early on. Her domain focused on animals, both wild and domestic, and the hunt, but she was also a fertility goddess who was invoked to aid conception and birth. Diana was also considered a protector of Rome's lower classes and slaves, with her festival day - 13 August, the Ides of the month - being a holiday for the latter. Today, the most famous place of worship associated with Diana is the sacred grove of Diana Nemorensis, or Diana of the Wood, on the shores of Lake Nemi about an hour outside of Rome. She also had her own temple on the Aventine in the city, which was home to the foundation charter of the Latin League that apparently dated back to the 6th century BCE.

MERCURY

**THE WINGED
MESSENGER GOD**

In 495 BCE, a new god came to Rome. Mercury was the deity of shopkeepers, travellers, transporters of goods, thieves and tricksters, and his brand new temple on the Aventine Hill was open for business. He shared it with his mother, Maia, who also featured in his festival, Mercuralia, every 15 May, the supposed anniversary of the temple's dedication. When it came to depicting Mercury, many drew their inspiration from his Greek equivalent, Hermes, giving him winged sandals or a winged cap. Others gave him a bag in which to carry the goods he was transporting, or a type of wand that was used to reconcile conflicts.

Mercury crops up quite a lot in ancient stories - in Virgil's *Aeneid*, it is he who reminded Aeneas that he needed to leave Dido to found Rome, and he also makes a few appearances in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, making visits to mortals as he liked to do.

VESTA

A GODDESS RESERVED FOR WOMEN

A round temple sat in the forum in the centre of Rome, and it contained a fire. If this flame should ever go out, it would mean disaster for Rome, so it was left under the care of the followers of Vesta. She was the goddess of the hearth fire - and the patron deity of bakers - so the connection is clear. Vesta's festival, Vestalia, was held every year on 7-15 June, and it was only at this time that women could enter the innermost sanctuary of her temples.

Usually depicted as a woman draped head to toe in fabric and often with her trusty ass by her side, Vesta found her way into the homes of ordinary Romans, often appearing on household shrines alongside the penates and lares.

Being one of the Vestal Virgins - a priestess in her cult - would also grant women privileges like a front row seat at the theatre instead of being relegated to the back of the audience.

VULCAN

**DON'T STAND TOO NEAR A VOLCANO
IF THIS GOD GETS ANGRY**

Vulcan wasn't known for being a looker - in fact, he'd been so unattractive when he cried as a baby that his mother, Juno, had thrown him from the heavens. The fall left him with a limp for the rest of his life. However, this worked out pretty well for him in the long run - it was how he eventually met Venus, ironically the goddess of beauty, who then became his bride, although their relationship wasn't exactly smooth-sailing. The legend goes that whenever Venus had an affair, Vulcan's anger would cause a volcano to erupt. The god of fire, Vulcan's festival day was 23 August, which saw the Vulcanalia celebration. He was also the blacksmith of the gods, and because of his power over destructive fire, his temples were usually located outside of cities, just in case.

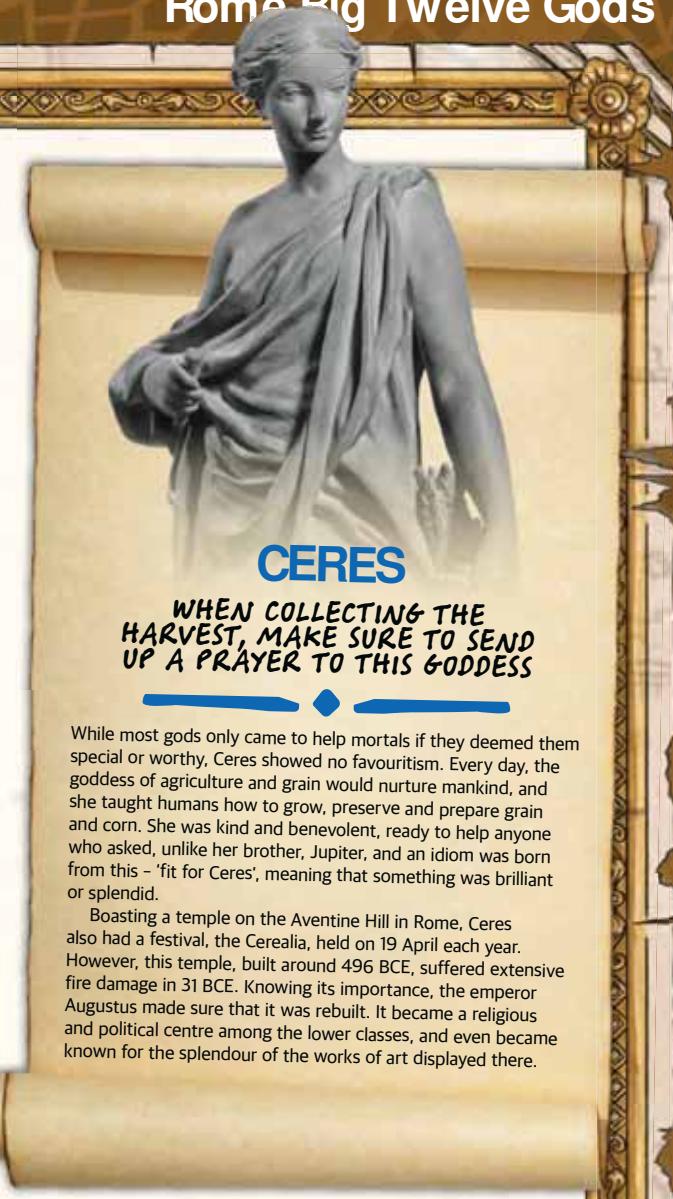


APOLLO

**A GREEK DEITY
TURNED ROMAN**

Sometimes Roman gods were pretty much carbon copies of their Greek counterparts, and Apollo certainly fell into that category. The deity of the Sun, healing and prophecy, among others, was a son of Jupiter and the twin brother of Diana. The first temple dedicated to him in Rome was built near the Theatre of Marcellus in the 5th century BCE for Apollo Medicus, or Apollo the Healer, as the city was ravaged by plague.

Apollo did enjoy one thing that most other gods didn't - he had an oracle at Delphi. People from all around the Mediterranean came to seek the deity's advice through his mouthpiece, the Pythia, and this continued from the Greek era through to the Romans as control passed to them in 191 BCE. The sanctuary remained through the Roman Empire with games being held there until Christianity began to take over. In 393 CE, Emperor Theodosius demanded that all pagan sanctuaries be closed, and Delphi's importance faded away along with the Roman gods.



CERES

**WHEN COLLECTING THE
HARVEST, MAKE SURE TO SEND
UP A PRAYER TO THIS GODDESS**

While most gods only came to help mortals if they deemed them special or worthy, Ceres showed no favouritism. Every day, the goddess of agriculture and grain would nurture mankind, and she taught humans how to grow, preserve and prepare grain and corn. She was kind and benevolent, ready to help anyone who asked, unlike her brother, Jupiter, and an idiom was born from this - 'fit for Ceres', meaning that something was brilliant or splendid.

Boasting a temple on the Aventine Hill in Rome, Ceres also had a festival, the Cerealia, held on 19 April each year. However, this temple, built around 496 BCE, suffered extensive fire damage in 31 BCE. Knowing its importance, the emperor Augustus made sure that it was rebuilt. It became a religious and political centre among the lower classes, and even became known for the splendour of the works of art displayed there.



How to Celebrate Saturnalia

Hailed as the forerunner to Christmas, the Romans liked to put on this spectacular party in midwinter

WHAT YOU'LL NEED...



Named after Saturn, the Roman god of agriculture, Saturnalia originated as a farming festival at the end of the sowing season. As the celebration evolved, 17 December came to signify the beginning of a seven-day festival of Roman hedonism, culminating on the midwinter solstice that was 23 December. The pagan festival truly was a celebration of misrule, where social order was turned on its head. All executions were cancelled and no war was to be declared. Instead, a sacrifice was made to Saturn and enormous feasts were held in his honour. Homes were decorated, gifts exchanged, and everyone was encouraged to have a thoroughly good time.



1 VISIT THE TEMPLE OF SATURN

Crowds gather at the Temple of Saturn to witness the unbinding of the statue's feet. For the rest of the year, woollen bonds wrap Saturn's feet but during Saturnalia they are cut, signifying the freedom of the festival. Sacrifices to the god are also made, and after this follows a public feast where revellers eat, drink and be merry.

Deck the halls

Homes were decorated with wreaths of greenery, thought to symbolise life in the dark nights of mid December.

"Io Saturnalia!"

The Saturnalia greeting, exchanged like "merry Christmas", was often heard as worshippers left the Temple of Saturn.



Relaxed dress

Men could ditch the traditional conservative toga for a more relaxed, brightly coloured tunic, known as 'synthesis', meaning 'put together'.



Legal gambling

During Saturnalia, any form of gambling is totally legal. Bets can be put on for the whole of the seven-day festival.

Bare it all

Naked dancing and singing in the streets is encouraged, as during Saturnalia, "all things that are serious are barred".



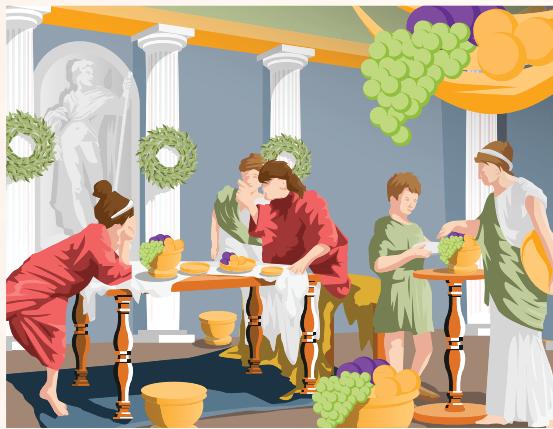
2 FREE YOUR SLAVES

Saturnalia is a celebration of freedom, and therefore all social hierarchy is lost for the duration. Present your slaves with the traditional felt hat of a freeman (called a 'pileum') and make merry with them as equals for the seven days of celebrations. The roles are reversed and it is now your job to serve them food.

HOW NOT TO... CELEBRATE SATURNALIA

In December 63 BCE, while the rest of Rome was feasting, singing and drinking their way through the annual seven-day romp that was Saturnalia, a plot to overthrow Rome was under way. It had begun in October, when consul Marcus Tullius Cicero was roused from his bed by news that a plot against Rome and Caesar was imminent, led by aristocrat Lucius Sergius Catilina.

Once Cicero was informed, he made a series of speeches denouncing Catilina. These inflammatory remarks sparked the resolution to assassinate Cicero. Under the cover of Saturnalia chaos, 12 fires were to be set and, in the confusion, Cicero would be murdered in his home. However, the rebels had been betrayed and this information reached Cicero before the Saturnalia parties began. The conspirators were caught and executed, and Catilina was killed in battle, ending the Conspiracy of Catiline.



3 ELECT A 'KING OF MISRULE'

Play a game of dice to select a 'king of misrule'. Whoever wins (even if it is a slave - remember, they are free men for Saturnalia) gets to be the king and set a series of silly tasks that the rest of the party must take part in. These tasks can include cork bobbing, singing, dancing and being thrown into cold water.



5 GO FORTH AND GAMBLE

During the festival, all gambling laws are relaxed. Therefore, you can partake in games at your leisure and openly in public, along with the many other frivolities to be enjoyed like naked and drunken singing, dancing and clapping. Children are also allowed to join in the gambling, using nuts as currency to bet with.

4 PREPARE A FEAST

Have your servants prepare a marvellous feast to celebrate the festival, complete with a gilded centrepiece (although you must serve it to them). Ensure that Saturn dines with you by seating his effigy at the table. This is called 'lectisternium'. Or, if you're really lucky, accept an invitation to someone else's marvellous Saturnalia shindig.



6 EXCHANGE GIFTS

The last day of the festival is known as 'Sigillaria' and is for the exchanging of small gifts and trinkets. You can buy these from various vendors and they are usually little figurines of people and faces made from pottery or wax. You can also give small white candles, called 'cerei', to loved ones, and look forward to receiving your own gifts.

4 FAMOUS... SATURNALIA CONVENTIONATORS

Lucian of Samosata

125-180 CE, GREECE

In Lucian's poem *Saturnalia*, the god Saturn exclaims, "During my week the serious is barred: no business allowed."



Pliny the Younger

61 – c.113 CE, ITALY

A Saturnalia 'humbug', Pliny escaped festivities. "I neither interrupt their amusement nor they my studies," he wrote.



Gaius Valerius Catullus

c.84-54 BCE, ITALY

Poet Catullus was an enjoyer of the Saturnalia festivities, calling it in one of his works "the best of days".



Lucius Annaeus Seneca

4 BCE – 62 CE, ITALY

Also not approving of the revelry, Seneca described it as a "mob out of control 'in pleasantries'".



Roman Inventions

What did the Romans ever do for us? Well, they banished diseases, built roads and invented the welfare system - and that's just the start!

CALENDARS

Year invented/first used:
46 BCE

Early Roman calendars were taken from Greek models that operated around the lunar cycle. However, being a superstitious lot, the Romans considered even numbers unlucky and so altered the calendar to ensure that each month contained an odd number of days. Then in 46 BCE, Julius Caesar, along with the astronomer Sosigenes, devised the Julian system to align the calendar with the solar year. During this process, the 12 months - including July, named after Caesar - as we know them today in the Gregorian calendar, were included and the number of days in a year increased from 355 to 365.



ROADS

Year invented/first used: **500 BCE**

Developed as a means for the military machine to get around quickly, over 50,000 miles of paved roads were built by the Romans, with 29 major highways going into Rome alone. Constructed from dirt, gravel and bricks, the Roman roads were so sturdy that many are still used today and were built with curvature to allow for water drainage. With the Roman legion able to travel about 25 miles a day, these roads helped the empire expand over most of southern Europe.

**EM PEROR
JUSTINIAN I**
482–565 CE, Byzantine
(East Roman)

Justinian the Great was a Byzantine emperor who was responsible for rewriting the Corpus Juris Civilis, which is still the basis of civil law in the UK

A WELFARE SYSTEM

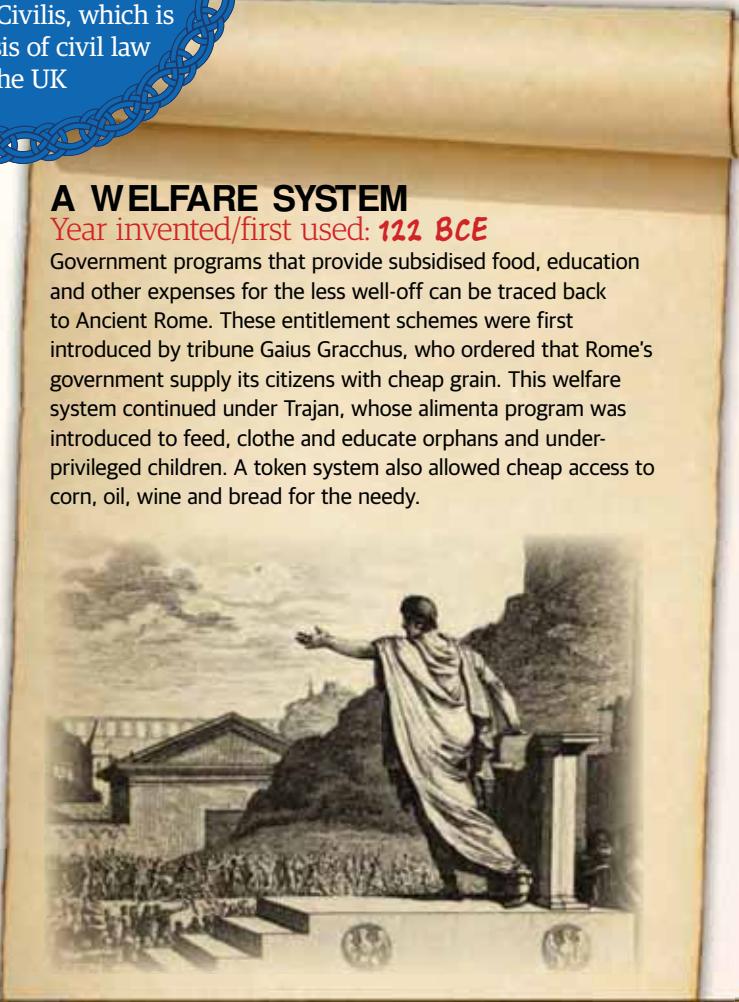
Year invented/first used: **121 BCE**

Government programs that provide subsidised food, education and other expenses for the less well-off can be traced back to Ancient Rome. These entitlement schemes were first introduced by tribune Gaius Gracchus, who ordered that Rome's government supply its citizens with cheap grain. This welfare system continued under Trajan, whose alimenta program was introduced to feed, clothe and educate orphans and underprivileged children. A token system also allowed cheap access to corn, oil, wine and bread for the needy.

CONCRETE

Year invented/first used:
Around 2,100 years ago

Structures such as the Colosseum and the Pantheon bear testament to the Romans being great architects and highly prolific builders, but the fact that they are still standing today, thousands of years later, is thanks to an early form of cement known as opus caementicium. Created from a recipe of slaked lime and volcanic ash to form a sticky paste that was then mixed with volcanic rocks, this cement set quickly to enable the construction of some truly incredible buildings.



NEWSPAPERS

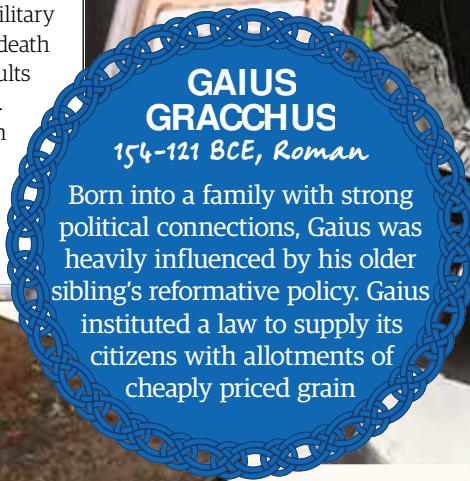
Year invented/used: 131 BCE

Though it is hard to imagine the Romans delighting in an early form of celebrity tittle-tattle via some ancient form of *The Sun*, they did inscribe texts detailing military, legal and civil issues onto metal or stone and made them accessible to the public. Known as acta diurna, or daily acts, these early newspapers included details of Roman military victories, birth and death notices, and the results of gladiatorial bouts. They were posted in heavily populated areas for the public to digest and discuss.



GAIUS GRACCHUS 154-121 BCE, Roman

Born into a family with strong political connections, Gaius was heavily influenced by his older sibling's reformative policy. Gaius instituted a law to supply its citizens with allotments of cheaply priced grain



ARCHES & AQUEDUCTS

Year invented/used: 312 BCE

Roman architects discovered that a structural arch could support a great weight and so these were used throughout their territory to create buildings that were not only stunning to look at, but structurally sturdy to withstand the test of time. Arches were also crucial to aqueducts as they could help raise a structure up to create a downward slope that would allow water to trickle in to a desired location. Even a fleeting glance at Roman architecture will testify the importance of arches in all walks of Roman life.



SEWERS

Year invented/first used: 735 BCE

While aqueducts were developed by the Romans to allow fresh water to flow into Roman cities, they also developed early sewer systems to take human waste out of the cities to eradicate the risk of contaminating clean water. In Rome alone there were seven major sewers running out of the city (which can still be found under the city to this day) and sewer systems were also incorporated into other large cities around the empire.



FIELD SURGERY

Year invented/first used: Unknown

The Romans made many breakthroughs in medicine, such as pioneering the use of the cesarean section and developing many surgical tools. However, it was establishing a military medical corps that was perhaps their greatest medical innovation as it meant that soldiers in their garrisons could be treated on the field of combat, and countless lives saved through the use of hemostatic tourniquets and arterial surgical clamps to stem the loss of blood. The Romans even had the foresight to sterilise their tools in hot water.

BOUND BOOKS

Year invented/first used: 1 CE

Up until the Roman Empire, literature took on the form of heavy clay tablets and scrolls, but the Romans managed to streamline this medium by creating the codex, which was a stack of bound pages. Early codices consisted of bound wax tablets, but these were shortly replaced by animal skin parchment that was more akin to book pages. According to historians, Caesar created an early version of a codex by stacking pages of a papyrus, but bound codices didn't become the norm in Rome until at least the 1st century.



THE TWELVE TABLES

Year invented/first used: 450 BCE

Much of early Roman law came from the Twelve Tables, a code that formed part of the constitution during the republican era. In fact, many of the legal terms taken from this code, such as subpoena, pro bono and affidavit, are still used in modern law. The Twelve Tables contained laws relating to property, religion and divorce and also detailed appropriate punishments for a wide range of crimes, from petty theft to witchcraft. Developed slightly later was the Corpus Juris Civilis, a more streamlined document that first introduced the notion of innocent until proven guilty.

306 – 337 CE

CONSTANTINE

THE GREAT

Christians had been lion fodder for centuries, but under Constantine they clawed their way to acceptability



The young Roman emperor peered skywards towards the clouds, deep in prayer in an area of northern Rome between the Milvian Bridge and Saxe Rubra, a village on the ancient Via Flaminia. As the ruler of Britain and Gaul in an empire by now split into territories, Constantine had travelled a great distance to wage war against his brother-in-law Maxentius, who had seized control of central and southern Italy from Emperor Galerius to become the region's self-proclaimed imperial leader.

It was 27 October 312 CE and what Constantine saw that day as his armies prepared for battle gave him great confidence that he would defeat his rival, and it went on to change the entire course of religion in the empire. For according to Eusebius, one of the early historians of the Christian Church, while Constantine prayed at noon, a "marvellous sign appeared to him from heaven". It was, he said, the Chi-Rho (the combination of Greek X and P, the first two letters of the name of Christ) just above the Sun, bearing a Greek inscription that translated as "in this sign conquer".

Constantine believed this to be a divine intervention, a hunch confirmed to him in a dream that night when he recalled Jesus Christ had willed him to use the cross in battle. He did, painting the first two letters of Christ's

name in Greek on the soldier's shields. Little surprise, then, that when the opposing men were duly defeated by his army and Maxentius drowned in the River Tiber, Constantine was said to have attributed the victory to the Christian God - a moment that paved the way for a huge change in the way the empire viewed the fast-growing Christian religion. Constantine, until then a pagan monotheist, promptly turned years of Christian persecution on its head and began to fully support the movement.

Of course, this all sounds very fanciful, with many a historian casting doubt on such claims (some say Christianity was instilled in him by his mother, Helena, but this hasn't been verified either). Although a team of geologists in 2003 found evidence that pointed to a meteor appearing over central Italy in 312, perhaps

believe he was the 13th apostle and he would go down in history as the first Christian emperor.

Rome had been infamously unkind to Christians. It had been the case from the very beginning: Jesus had been crucified in 33 CE despite great reluctance on the part of Judaea's governor Pontius Pilate. But when followers began to believe that Christ had risen, a distinct religious sect began to grow. Persecution of the Christians began when Rome suffered a ferocious fire in 64 CE, which burned for six days and destroyed one-third of the city. Emperor Nero sought to temper accusations that he had started it by pointing the finger at the Christians instead. He gathered up some of the followers and engulfed them in flames. Rome suddenly had an enemy within, Nero suggested, and widespread disapproval of them grew.

Christians were executed in large numbers, usually for entertainment in the Colosseum and provincial arenas. Domitian, who ruled between 81 and 96 CE, made being Christian illegal, but it didn't appear to deter the religion's growth. On 7 March 203, Vibia Perpetua was among five Christians led into an arena in Carthage, North Africa. Wild beasts attacked them and Perpetua was wounded by a bull - a sword finishing her off. And yet it was seen as a victory for faith over death by the Christians who were unafraid of becoming martyrs and could show the Romans that persecution was pointless. Christians continued to be killed, though -

"Constantine, until then a pagan monotheist, promptly turned years of Christian persecution on its head"

explaining the light across the sky, an account just one year later makes no reference to the cross appearing from the heavens. The first time the dream and the scrawl on the shields appeared to make it into literature was at the hands of the Christian author Lactantius in 314 CE. But whatever the motivation, the outcome was the same: Constantine would come to

A 16th-century
painting depicting the
First Council of Nicaea





Raphael's depiction of Constantine the Great defeating Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge

Diocletian was tyrannical against them – but it only served to make the religion stronger. It was in this environment that Constantine came to rule from 306 CE. As a ruthless, commendable soldier who had risen through the empire's eastern ranks to become a military tribune under Diocletian and Galerius, he would have had first-hand experience of how the Romans treated the Christians. But, just as importantly, he would have seen how his father, Constantius, played no part in such persecutions.

Constantius had become the senior Western emperor to rule Britain and Gaul in 305 CE, and Constantine, born in the west of the empire, had returned to his roots to be with him shortly after. He barely got time to know his father, who died on 25 July 306 CE during a winter break in a battle against the Picts. But, on Constantius' deathbed recommendation, Constantine was promptly hailed Augustus by his troops. And while he was only accepted as Caesar of the west by Galerius, there was a sense of change in the air.

To many people's surprise, Galerius ended the Diocletianic Persecution of Christianity by issuing an edict of toleration in Serdica in 311 CE, despite being an opponent of the religion (although the growing threat to Rome's imperial authority made the move inevitable). This meant

Christianity would be recognised and accepted by the empire, and it ended eight years of churches being destroyed, Holy Scriptures being burned, church property being investigated, and privileges and rights being removed. But it was under Constantine that the greater strides were made.

In February 313 CE, he and Licinius, who controlled the Balkans, met in Milan and thrashed out an agreement that promised religious toleration for Christianity within the Roman Empire. "No one whatsoever should be denied the opportunity to give his heart to the observance of the Christian religion," it said. In

recognition of the empire being predominantly non-Christian, it also proclaimed that people were free to worship any deity they wished, heralding what is widely seen as the touchstone of religious tolerance. For the first time, religions, whether Jewish, Christian, pagan or those that followed the traditional Roman gods, could all exist together.

But it was also the first time Christianity had been backed by the Roman Empire. It became institutionalised, with male bishops becoming government figures and women pushed into the background. At the same time,

DEFINING MOMENT

Constantine sent east

In order for Diocletian to foster loyalty among those who promoted to rule Rome's territories, sons – including Constantine – are sent eastward. There they reside in Diocletian's court where they are trained as fighters, taught both Latin and Greek, and become schooled in the ways of Rome so that, should the time come, they can be effective emperors too. Diocletian rules a period of relative stability, but mainly because of the way he quashes those who threatened his power, among them Christians. It is generally thought that Constantine witnesses the relentless persecution of the Christians.

DEFINING MOMENT

Trouble and strife

When Constantine gives notice to Galerius that he is now the emperor, the eastern leadery refuses to acknowledge the status and instead grants him the title of Caesar, handing the honour of Augustus to Severus. But Constantine still holds great power, ruling over Britain, Gaul and Spain. When Maximian's son, Maxentius, rebels in Rome, it is Severus who is sent to deal with the situation. But he hasn't reckoned on Maxentius offering his father co-rule, their joint force earning loyalty from the soldiers and securing victory over Severus. The following year, Severus is executed.

TIMELINE

FEBRUARY C.272 CE

293 CE

293 CE

305 CE

306 CE

306 CE

Constantine is born

Although the actual year is not certain, Constantine is born to a Roman army officer called Flavius Valerius Constantius and his consort, Helena, who today is revered as a saint.

Father becomes Caesar

Emperor Diocletian appoints two junior emperors, or Caesars: elevating Galerius in the East and allowing Maximian to promote Constantius in the West. It is part of a tetrarchy, or 'rule of four'.

Father made emperor

When Diocletian retires, both Constantius and Galerius are promoted to Augustus of their territories. Constantine, overlooked as Caesar at the time, travels to Britain to help his father on his campaign.

Constantine proclaims himself emperor

When Constantius dies in Eboracum, or modern-day York, the Tetrarchy begins to unravel. Constantius asks his soldiers to make Constantine his successor, and they do.

Christian property was returned and churches were permitted. But as well as restoring peace, stability and security, Constantine also turned Christianity into a fighting religion and troops fought under the symbol of the cross. On 18 September 324, Constantine battled Licinius at Chrysopolis and won, leaving him the sole emperor of Rome, thus ending the Tetrarchy that had cut the empire into four and had so caused the bitter divisions.

The victor felt a fresh start was needed and so he turned to the site of old Byzantium. There he sought to establish a new capital, Constantinople - modern-day Istanbul in Turkey - which not only bore his name but grew, after his death, into the largest and wealthiest city

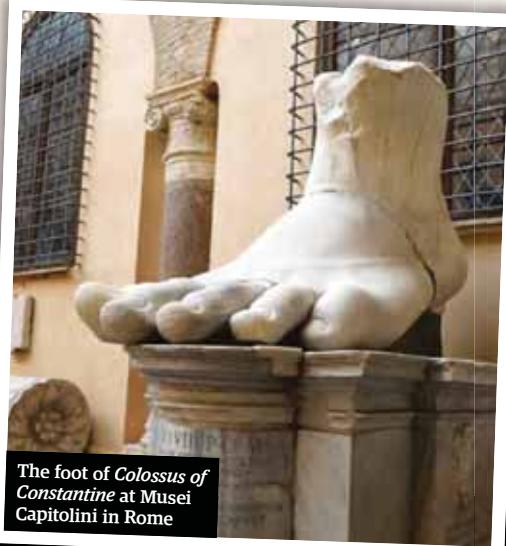
"It ended eight years of churches being destroyed, Holy Scriptures being burned, church property being investigated"

in Europe. Thought to be easily defendable and holding a strategic position, it also became a Christian city. Not that Rome wasn't turned around, too; Constantine oversaw a massive religious building programme, ordering the construction of a basilica over the top of Ancient Rome's Circus of Nero between 318 and 322. It was completed in 360 CE, years after his death. Vatican City is situated in that spot today.

But even then, Constantine's Christian plans were not satiated and he went to great lengths to make the religion fully legalised across the empire. The First Council of Nicaea, a council of Christian bishops, was convened in 325 CE. This ratified the doctrine of the Trinity: the combination of the Jewish God as the Father, Jesus his son, and the Holy Spirit being the natural force. The full acceptance of Christianity didn't lead to entirely peaceful times - Christians ended up turning on each other amid

controversy over the precise interpretation of the faith - but it allowed it to firmly establish itself without fear.

Despite overseeing so much religious change, Constantine himself was only baptised during his dying days, although that was quite common at the time. His conversion to Christianity came in 337 CE, shortly after Easter when he had fallen ill. Choosing the River Jordan because it was said to be where Christ himself had been baptised by John the Baptist, the Arianising bishop Eusebius of Nicomedia performed the ceremony, absolving the emperor of the many sins he felt he had accumulated. Constantine would die soon after on 22 May 337, aged 65, his legacy secure for the centuries to come.



DEFINING MOMENT

Battle of Mardia

Although Constantine and Licinius had worked together - the Edict of Milan having paved the way for Christian tolerance - any peace is not to last. Constantine has invaded the Balkan provinces ruled by Licinius the year before and now they are to battle again. It leads Licinius to agree Constantine is his superior in government and peace lasts for seven years. In the meantime, Licinius (in 320) has begun to oppress Christians again. In 324, civil war breaks out. There are numerous battles culminating in Licinius being defeated in the Battle of Chrysopolis.

BUILDING A NEW ROME

They say Rome wasn't built in a day, and neither, come to that, was the empire's new capital, which came to be built upon the Ancient Greek colony of Byzantium. Constantine had earmarked the site in 324 CE, noting that it stood between Europe and Asia, far closer to the eastern part of the empire than Rome, and offered the chance of a fresh start for a new, combined land that was brought together under his rule.

The new Rome was built over six years and it was split into 14 regions, just like Rome had been. Consecrated in 330 CE, it was walled for defence and filled with art taken from Greek and Roman cities. There were new palaces and churches, and a ceremonial square - the Augustaion - was also laid, surrounded by porticos. But, since Christians were not in favour of the bloody gladiatorial games that had taken place elsewhere, the amphitheatre found itself abandoned.

The city became known as Constantinople, in honour of the emperor, and it was seen as the gateway to Europe. It was also the centre for trade and, for a long time, the world's largest and richest city. But centuries later, as the Ottoman Empire grew all around it, Christian Europe would eventually fear its fall. The city, then one of the last bastions of the Roman Empire, finally succumbed to the Islamists in 1453.



The Column of Constantine in Istanbul was taken from the Temple of Apollo in Rome to Constantinople in 330 CE

Timeline of events:

- 310 CE**: Continued unsettling rebellion. Licinius has been appointed Augustus in the West, but Maximian and Maxentius still cause problems for Constantine. Maximian commits suicide in 310, and the following year Maxentius fights Licinius.
- 28 OCTOBER 312 CE**: Battle of the Milvian Bridge. The rivalries having come to a head, Constantine and Maxentius - both brothers-in-law - fight a fierce battle. Maxentius is killed. The day before, Constantine had apparently received a message from Christ.
- 313 CE**: Constantine backs Christianity. 312 is said to have had a profound effect on Constantine and he ensures the persecution of the Christians is over with a declaration of religious tolerance.
- 317 CE**: A united empire. Constantine becomes sole emperor. The Tetrarchy ends and he is free to push forward with his vision for the empire. He looks to move the capital from Rome to what will become Constantinople.
- 324 CE**: First Council of Nicaea. Constantine looks to establish the first ecumenical council of the Christian Church, and he lays many of the traditions that will become part and parcel of Christianity.
- 325 CE**: Constantine baptised and dies. Constantine becomes a Christian himself in the last days of his life when he washes away his sins in a baptism at the River Jordan. He then dies of illness on 22 May 337.
- 22 MAY 337 CE**: Constantine baptised and dies.

THE LAST DAYS OF THE WEST

The earth-shattering collapse of the Western Roman Empire was the result of invasions, corruption and cruelty

Words Charles Ginger



Throughout history, the fall of mighty empires has rarely played out as an instantaneous and devastating collapse, and the demise of the Western Roman Empire was certainly no different. Pinpointing a precise start date for the empire's decline has proven to be a difficult and contentious task, with many historians pointing the finger of blame at Emperor Caracalla's decision to grant all free men within the empire citizenship in 212 CE, thereby removing the main incentive to join the Roman legions and consequently starting a downward spiral that would see

Rome forever more struggling to field adequate armies.

Of course, it is too simplistic to apportion the responsibility for the fall of the Western Empire to one single factor, for there were many reasons for its gradual disintegration. By the time of Emperor Avitus' ascension to power in 455 CE, Rome had been sacked twice, once by the Visigoths in 410 CE and then again in the year of Avitus' coronation by a rampant horde of Vandals.



The disastrous Battle of Adrianople dealt the Romans a blow they would never truly recover from, culminating in the death of Emperor Valens

In 410 CE, the Visigoths succeeded in sacking Rome, becoming the first army to do so in eight centuries

"Thankfully for the West's cause, this period of unrest between both halves of the empire wouldn't last"



Recalled as the only able Western emperor of the 5th century, Majorian sought to defend the rights of his provincial subjects



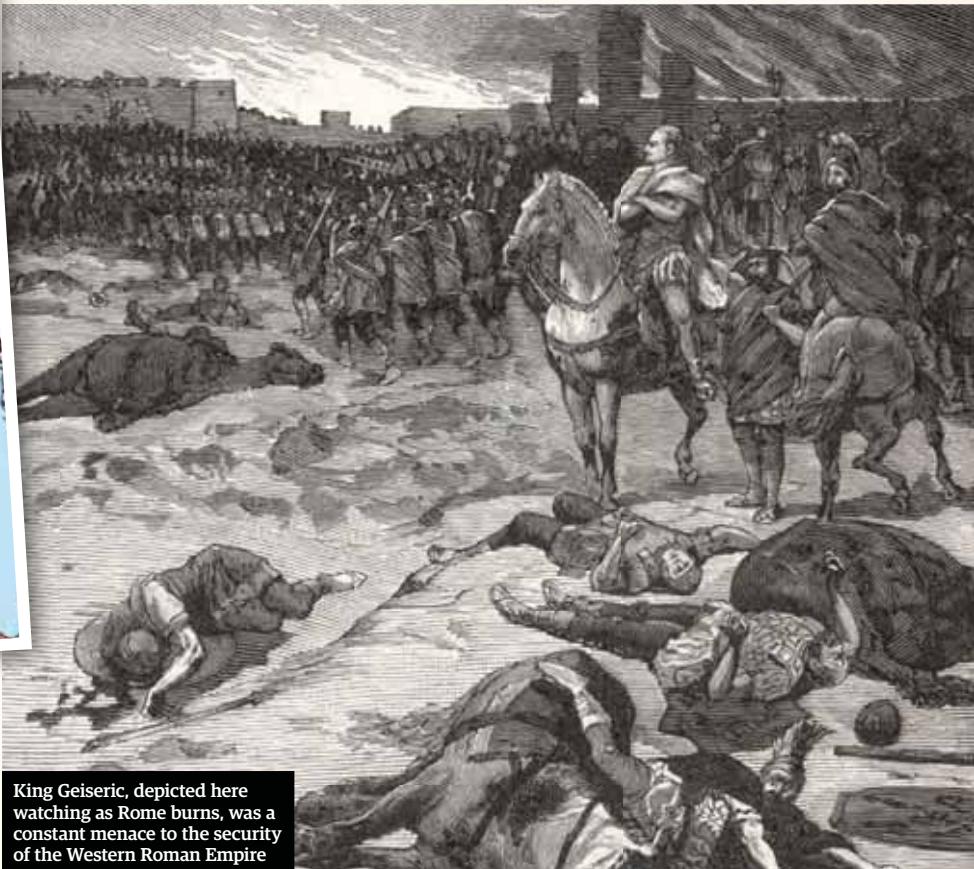


The Western Roman Empire as its greatest extent

Conscious of his somewhat tenuous grip on power, the newly appointed Avitus moved quickly to appoint a comes (count of the empire) by the name of Ricimer, a general of Germanic descent who would play a major role in the rise and fall of several emperors. Yet the title bestowed upon him by Avitus was not as glamorous as it had previously been, for by 455 CE the once enormous sphere of Roman influence had deflated to such an extent that it now only encompassed a scattering of regions in southern Gaul and the Italian Peninsula itself. It was an empire that Avitus would not rule for very long.

Despite managing to secure an – admittedly doomed – truce with the Vandals during his first winter at the helm, the strength of this agreement was found wanting in March of 456 CE as the Germanic ‘barbarians’ once again resumed hostilities in the south of Italy. Avitus’ failure to completely stem the Vandals’ incursions was compounded by the Visigoths’ progress in Hispania. The Gaulish ruler of Rome was struggling abroad, and it wasn’t long before his domestic unpopularity finally made his position untenable.

Never slow in seizing an opportunity, Ricimer moved quickly to topple Avitus, who was roundly loathed by Rome’s hungry population (a combination of the Vandals choking off Rome’s imports and the foreign troops that had accompanied Avitus resulted in food shortages in the wake of the city’s destruction). The general’s machinations inevitably spurred Avitus to retaliate, but his hopes were to be dashed. Heading an enormous force, Avitus marched to confront Ricimer’s own army near Piacenza in northern Italy, only to witness the destruction



King Geiseric, depicted here watching as Rome burns, was a constant menace to the security of the Western Roman Empire

of his host. With no option but to flee, Avitus is thought to have died during the first month of 457 CE while en route to the safety of Gaul, possibly on the orders of the man who would succeed him, an ally of Ricimer’s in the rebellion called Majorian.

By the time of Majorian’s coronation in December 457, the Roman Empire was spiralling terminally towards its demise, a monumental yet gradual collapse resulting from numerous overlapping factors, a primary one being continuous barbarian invasions.

In its prime, the empire had often crushed such uprisings with relative ease, but conquest and consolidation cost the empire vast sums of money – funds that, as time went by, could no longer be supplied in the form of war booty. Instead Rome’s leaders had to look closer to home, taxing the wealthiest of its citizens in a desperate bid to support a failing military machine.

This necessary measure inevitably alienated the city’s monied inhabitants, many of whom resorted to leaving Rome in order to keep hold of their wealth. When coupled with rampant corruption within the Senate and the inevitable decline in slave labour that accompanied the empire’s halting expansion, this widespread avoidance of tax only served to weaken an already financially shaky empire at a time when enemies such as the Huns, Goths and Vandals were strengthening, the latter of which had

inflicted a chastening lesson on Rome in 435 CE when they began to settle across North Africa, a development the Romans were powerless to stop. If the empire was going to survive, this vital region would have to be reclaimed, a goal that Majorian quickly set his sights on.

A leader who sought to curtail the financial deviance so damaging to his beleaguered realm, Majorian took his administrative obligations as seriously as his military ones, yet he is best remembered for his martial efforts. Intent on resurrecting Rome’s crumbling empire, Majorian swiftly smashed an Alemmanic (German tribe) invasion before storming into Gaul in 458 and putting King Theodoric II’s Visigoth force to the sword at the Battle of Arelate. Success in Hispania would follow for an emperor described by many scholars as brilliant in every respect. However, glory in the field of battle would prove elusive just when Majorian needed it most.

Hungry to reclaim the precious resources of North Africa, Majorian had wisely accrued a fleet of 300 vessels with which to transport an invasion force across the Mediterranean and onto the shores of the former Carthaginian Empire. Sadly for the ambitious emperor, he would never even get the chance to attempt a crossing, for his entire fleet was destroyed while anchored off the coast of Hispania by men in his own ranks who had treacherously accepted payment from the Vandals to betray Rome.

ROME'S KINGMAKER



Ricimer led an army in 456 that defended Italy against an armada of 60 Vandal ships

Born in 405 CE to Rechila, a member of the Germanic Suebi tribe and king of Galicia, a region in what is today northern Spain, and his wife, a daughter of the king of the Visigoths, Flavius Ricimer would grow into a ferociously ambitious young man who refused to allow his barbarian lineage to hold him back.

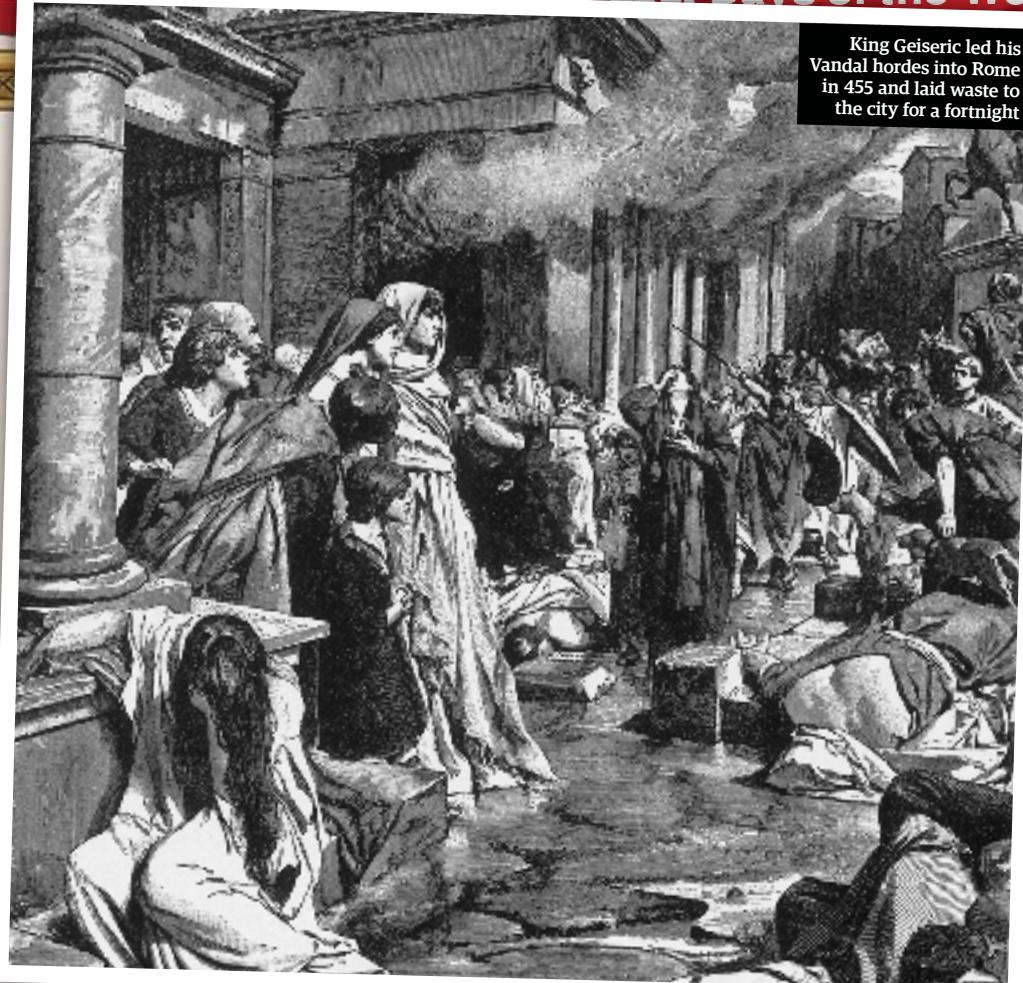
It is estimated that Ricimer began his service to the Roman military in the early 420s. He would rise rapidly through the ranks, befriending a future emperor in a man called Majorian and raising his own forces in the mid 450s with which to crush the Vandals in two key engagements. Both of these victories came in 456 at the battles of Ariegentum and Corsica – achievements that gained him heroic status back in Rome.

With glory on the field secured, Ricimer turned his attention back to Rome's political scene, aiding his former colleague Majorian in toppling Avitus and stealing the throne. Unable to rule due to his background and Christian faith, Ricimer determined to take a slightly subtler route to power, controlling a number of Western Roman emperors for almost 20 years, during which time any incumbent ruler who displeased him quickly found themselves removed from power – violently.

Crushed by this astounding reversal, Majorian soon made for Rome. Upon reaching the city he must have been startled to be arrested by none other than his old ally Ricimer. His incarceration was tortuous but brief, for five days later Majorian was beheaded on 7 August 461 CE. Yet again, the empire was in need of a leader.

A brief jostle for power ensued as Emperor Leo I of the Eastern Empire sought to promote a candidate of his choosing, but Ricimer would triumph in the end with the eventual appointment of Libius Severus, a man who would rule (under the watchful gaze of Ricimer) for four years before he died of natural causes.

Thankfully for the Western Empire's cause, this period of unrest between both halves of the empire wouldn't last, with the ascension of Anthemius as emperor in 467 CE, an elevation that pleased both Ricimer and Leo I. However, while the two realms worked to come together again, the differences between them were many and stark.



King Geiseric led his Vandal hordes into Rome in 455 and laid waste to the city for a fortnight

While its sibling struggled with numerous issues, the Eastern Roman Empire went from strength to strength as the 5th century wore on. Blessed with greater financial resources than the West, the East was better placed to bribe ambitious barbarian leaders, which it did successfully when it came to keeping the ruthless Attila the Hun at bay. By contrast, the West suffered greatly at the hands of Attila prior to his death in 453 CE, both indirectly due to the sudden influx of refugees that poured across the Roman borders as the Huns rampaged across Europe, and as a direct result of his invasion of northern Italy.

If gold didn't prove sufficiently enticing to ward off an invasion, the East – again, thanks to its wealth – could rely on a stable standing army to defend it (not to mention the imposing walls erected to protect Constantinople, a fixture that thwarted Attila's efforts to take the city), something that only served to encourage invading tribes to turn their attentions to the weaker West. Of these tribes, the Vandals proved to be a thorn in Roman sides, and the situation was no different for Anthemius.

By 468 CE, Anthemius was a year into what was turning into a promising reign. Supported by both the ever-present Ricimer and his counterpart in the East, Leo I, Anthemius enjoyed cordial relations with the other half of the empire, a unity that resulted in both sides

determining to work as one to finally put an end to the Vandal presence in North Africa.

Led by Basiliscus (Leo I's brother-in-law), an armada of about 1,000 ships set sail for what is today the coast of Tunisia with a vast army of both Western and Eastern troops on board. Yet while this new invasion force would better Majorian's in actually making landfall, their hopes of victory were dashed just as brutally at the Battle of Cape Bon.

Alert to the real and pressing threat to his empire, King Geiseric sent forth a wave of fireships into the Roman ranks before unleashing his own fleet, causing truly catastrophic losses of 10,000 men and 100 vessels. In one fell swoop, the Germanic ruler and one-time sacker of Rome extinguished the last remaining hope of survival for the Western Roman Empire.

Bereft of the resources offered by its former African territory, the empire soon found maintaining its armed forces a far heavier burden, one made no easier to bear in 470 CE when a force commanded by Anthemius' son failed to make any headway against the Visigoths in Gaul. With the south lost and Rome's grip on the western provinces loosening, Anthemius' reign appeared doomed, and it was little helped by the Senate's suspicions of a ruler of Greek birth. Even Ricimer's support could no longer be relied on.



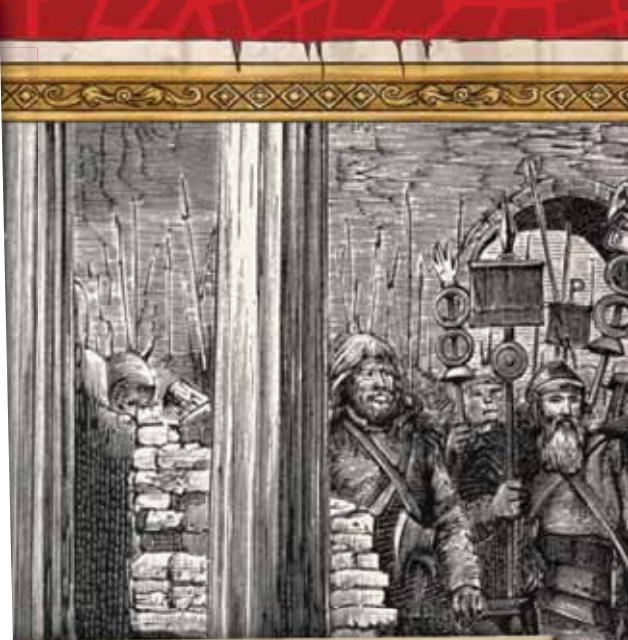
Majorian lost 300 ships at the Battle of Cartagena in 461, an act of betrayal that prevented Rome from retaking North Africa

In 472 CE the opportunistic general moved against his former friend by declaring Olybrius (a man close to Leo I) as the new emperor of the West following tensions with Anthemius. This inevitably sparked open war between forces loyal to the emperor and those beholden to Ricimer. The conflict culminated in a savage engagement in Rome in which Anthemius' troops were scythed down en masse by a barbarian army that showed no mercy. Clemency was not even afforded to Anthemius, who, having scrambled to the 'safety' of a church, was arrested and executed.

No doubt pleased to have yet again bested a political rival and secured power for his chosen candidate, for once Ricimer had played the wrong hand. Olybrius (who was deemed an illegitimate ruler by an outraged Eastern Empire) would only last for seven months before he passed away from dropsy. He was soon followed into the afterlife by Ricimer, the indomitable military powerhouse eventually laid low by a haemorrhage in 472.

Olybrius was succeeded four months after his death by a Dalmatian called Glycerius at the behest of Gundobad, king of the Burgundians and nephew of Ricimer - a second affront to the East. Without the backing of Ricimer and aware of the East's refusal to accept him, Glycerius made overtures to Leo I in a bid to heal the rift between the empires. His olive branch was snapped and thrown back in his face with force as Leo, by now hugely unpopular due to his banning of non-religious festivals in the East, not only nominated Julius Nepos as emperor of the West, but then proceeded to send a fleet to invade Italy and claim the throne. This was one of the last acts of Leo's reign, as dysentery claimed him that year, putting an end to a reign that had begun in 457 CE.

As the husband to Leo I's niece, Nepos had extremely close ties to the Eastern emperor's



ODOACER: FIRST KING OF ITALY



In spite of how he came to power, sources suggest that Odoacer enjoyed the full support of the Roman Senate

Believed to have hailed from the eastern-Germanic Scirii tribe, Odoacer was born in 435 CE. It was by this time Roman custom to provide foederati (barbarian regions loyal to Rome) with various benefits in return for military aid, evidence of how weak the empire had become. As such, Odoacer journeyed to Italy in around 470 to serve in the Roman army.

His career fighting for the failing empire, which began during the rule of Anthemius, lasted for around six years; sufficient time to rise to a position of command. By 476, Odoacer clearly felt he and his troops were due some reward for their efforts on Rome's behalf, and initially Orestes, who had recently installed his son Romulus, promised to grant

the barbarians under Odoacer the territory they demanded. However, he unwisely chose to renege on this deal, unleashing an uprising that would prove the death of the Western Roman Empire.

During his reign as king of Italy, Odoacer enjoyed martial success, conquering the independent region of Dalmatia after a two-year campaign. He would rule until 493, when he fatefully accepted an invitation to a banquet held by King Theodoric, who had been nominated as king of Italy in 488 by the Eastern Roman emperor Zeno in a bid to depose Odoacer. Ignoring all the rules of hospitality, Theodoric broke bread with his rival before killing him with his own hands by cleaving his enemy in two.



Odoacer triumphantly rides into a humbled Ravenna (by then capital of the Western Empire) as Romulus bows to Italy's conqueror

court, which explains why he was Leo's preferred choice to replace Glycerius in the summer of 474. Nepos' fleet duly made for Ostia (near to the port of Rome) in June, landing on Italian soil at a time when Glycerius was hopelessly exposed (his master, Gundobad, had returned to Gaul to rule his kingdom in Burgundy). The hapless usurper had little choice but to quit the city, but he was soon unearthened. Nepos displayed remarkable restraint upon his rise to power, choosing to nominate his predecessor as a bishop instead of having him put to death, an act of kindness that he would one day come to regret.

Nepos' reign would prove to be as short-lived as his new bishop's, but before he was toppled by his own magister militum (a senior commanding

officer in the Roman military), Orestes, he first had to suffer the ignominy of acknowledging the Gothic kingdom that had been established in Gaul. The fact that he had no alternative but to do so is testament to how feeble the empire was by 475 CE.

Having been ejected from office in August by Orestes, Nepos escaped to his native Dalmatia to 'rule' at a distance. In truth he was emperor in name alone - as was ever the case in Ancient Rome, he who controlled the military also held the empire. In this case it was Orestes, a former servant of none other than Attila the Hun.

Despite his sudden and public deposition at the hands of an adviser he should have been able to trust, Nepos would survive until 480 CE. Sources suggest that he was stabbed to death

in his own villa, either by friends of a vengeful Glycerius (to whom Nepos owed his life) or on the direct orders of Odoacer, the man who would finally end Rome's rule of Italy.

Unusually for the age, Orestes decided not to rule himself, instead opting to crown his 15-year-old son Romulus Augustus as the new leader of a rapidly disintegrating Western Roman Empire in October 475 CE. Even so, his public reluctance to claim the throne for himself was merely an act; as father to the emperor and head of the military, he reigned from the shadows. His lust for power forced his son to bear a poisoned chalice during an ill-fated reign set to end in disaster.

Mocked as 'Augustulus' (Little Augustus), history has often judged Rome's last Western emperor harshly, forgetting that he was a teenager forced into office by a father hungry to rule a shattered empire at a time when the formerly stable East was tearing itself apart in a power struggle.

Crowned in February 474 CE by his seven-year-old son as co-emperor, Zeno ruled as emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire until he was betrayed by a close advisor and Basiliscus (the same man who was so roundly beaten at the Battle of Cape Bon). At the time of Romulus' rise to power, Zeno - who, along with his bitter rival for the throne, refused to accept Romulus as emperor in the West - was plotting what would turn out to be a successful return to Constantinople and his throne.

The extent to which Romulus was aware of the troubles in the Eastern Roman Empire is unclear, but he had little time to consider its ramifications - rebellion was well and truly afoot in his empire. Emboldened by the knowledge that the West was ailing, a confederation of Germanic tribes led by a formidable warrior named Odoacer decided to test the strength of Orestes' resilience by demanding that one-third of Italy should be handed over to them.

When Orestes promptly rebuffed their 'offer', Odoacer ignited a vicious uprising during which a rag-tag army led by Orestes was slaughtered outside the city of Placentia (modern-day Piacenza) before their leader was executed. With the empire decapitated by Orestes' death, Odoacer was free to march on Ravenna in northern Italy, where on 2 September 476 CE his mercenary hordes once again set about annihilating a weakened Roman army.

With nothing left standing between him and Odoacer's rampant army, young Romulus had no choice but to bend the knee to Italy's new conqueror and surrender the throne. In a matter of weeks, Odoacer had violently ended 1,200 years of Roman mastery of Italy, and in doing so he struck a final, fatal blow from which the Western Roman Empire would never manage to recover.



Anthemius was appointed as emperor by Leo I in a move that removed him as a candidate for the throne of the Eastern Empire



Prior to his death in 473, Leo I appointed his seven-year-old grandson Leo II as his heir

THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE

The dramas of the Eastern Empire were a match for anything that the West had been able to offer

 Words Jon Wright 

In 968 CE, Liutprand, bishop of Cremona, undertook a challenging diplomatic mission to Constantinople. He was far from impressed by the treatment he received and the people with whom he had to deal. He complained that the local wine was undrinkable and that his lodgings lacked both fresh water and a roof. As for the Byzantine emperor, well, he was a brute.

Nicephorus II, according to Liutprand, was a "monstrosity of man", full of ignorant opinions and as ugly as sin. He was "fat-headed and like a mole as to the smallness of his eyes... one whom it would not be pleasant to meet in the middle of the night." The people, in contrast, seemed to adore their emperor, though they were really just a "plebian, barefooted multitude". When Nicephorus paraded through the city, the crowds would shout out in adoration. What they really should have been saying, Liutprand suggested, was "you burnt-out old coal, you fool... you goat foot".

Liutprand claims to have found none of the glamour that was supposed to define the Byzantine court. The food was lousy, the clothes were third-rate, and the hospitality extended to visiting dignitaries was atrocious. This, it is fair to say, was an unusual response. Visitors usually raved about how beautiful and civilised Constantinople was, about the cultural riches and the elaborate ceremonies of the city.

Perhaps Liutprand was simply in a bad mood. Or perhaps Constantinople was just going

through a bad patch since, just a few decades earlier, Liutprand had been involved in another mission to the Byzantine court and appears to have had rather a jolly time. Constantine VII had been a much better host and Liutprand wrote of the "marvellous and unheard of manner of our reception". The place was filled with gorgeous thrones, bronze lions and mechanical animals. Dinner was served in huge golden bowls covered with purple cloth, and when being introduced, Liutprand was carried into the emperor's presence with great solemnity on the shoulders of eunuchs. The empire, as always, had its ups and downs: a defining characteristic of Byzantine history.

The phrase 'Byzantine' only began to be commonly applied to this mighty civilisation during the 16th century, but it represents a very different, but no less colourful, period in the history of the Roman Empire. And make no mistake, while the empire in the East had its share of unique characteristics - the use of the Greek language and the forms of religious devotion, for example - the emperors were always adamant that they, and they alone, were the true successors of earlier rulers in the West.

Though Constantinople had been an important city since the 4th century, it entered its heyday following the fall of the Western Empire in 476 CE.



A mosaic depicting the Virgin and Child in the Hagia Sophia



"The emperors were always adamant that they, and they alone, were the true successors of earlier rulers in the West"

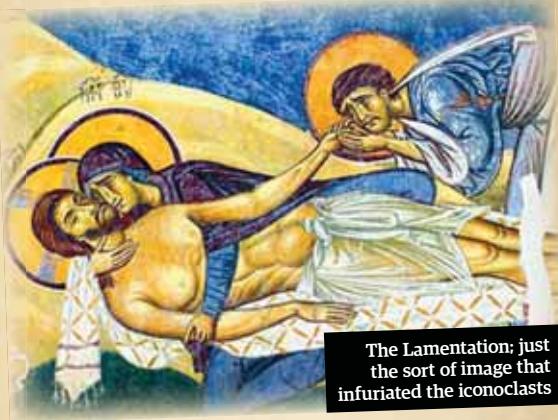
Perhaps the most famous emperor of them all: Justinian, depicted here in a mosaic found in San Vitale Basilica in Ravenna



The mighty walls of Constantinople that repelled many a would-be invader through the centuries

PICTURING JESUS

Were religious images sublime or sinful? Opinion was divided in the Eastern Empire



The Lamentation; just the sort of image that infuriated the iconoclasts

Concern about the portrayal of holy subjects was particularly keen in the Eastern Christian churches. Matters came to a head in the 8th century when Emperor Leo III ordered a wide-scale destruction of religious images. Riots ensued and many of the protestors were whipped, exiled or mutilated. Art was burned and, as one contemporary lamented, churches were "scraped down and smeared with ashes".

These events provoked uproar in the Western Church, and many angry letters were passed between popes and emperors. Images, as Pope Gregory II explained, were of great value because they could instruct the illiterate. The empress Irene approved the use of images in 787. Emperor Theophilus reversed her decision early in the next century, ordering artists to destroy or spit (quite literally) upon their works, inflicting harsh punishments on those who would not comply. An artist named Lazarus was subjected to "such severe tortures that his flesh melted away" and when he stubbornly began work again, following his recovery, red hot irons were pressed into his hands. Happily, by the mid 9th century, the turmoil came to an end and religious art was once again sanctioned in Eastern churches.

The territories over which it ruled came and went with alarming frequency – indeed, the extent of those territories was something of a geopolitical seesaw – and there would be both gifted and atrocious rulers. But Constantinople was mighty. It was blessed by its location on vital trade routes and, however hard Byzantium's enemies tried, the city's famously robust walls rarely succumbed to their onslaughts. As one historian put it: "You can't have a century without a couple of sieges of Constantinople."

But it was only with the advance of the Ottomans in the mid 15th century that the empire finally came to an end. By then, 1,000 years of triumphs and tribulations had passed. Along the way, the empire had fostered some of the most spectacular artistic and cultural achievements the world had ever seen.

The story began well, under rulers such as the hard-working Anastasius I (r.491–516 CE), an able administrator, but grander dreams had not evaporated. Could the Western Empire, or at least some of it, be reclaimed? Enter Justinian, during whose reign (527–565) the great military leader Belisarius and his colleagues managed to seize parts of Italy, North Africa and southern Spain. The financial cost was exorbitant, but the boost to Byzantine morale was perhaps a price worth paying.

Less satisfactory were the attempts to battle Persia, Byzantium's traditional enemy, and, distracted by adventures in the West, the empire failed to rebuff encroachments by the Slavic peoples. Justinian also

found time to codify law to reduce the risks of arbitrary justice; his efforts would be reflected in the legal systems of dozens of countries for centuries. He even found time to transform the empire's financial fortunes by introducing the production of silk. Indian monks smuggled in the eggs of silkworms and an irksome dependency on Persian silk was cast off.

Less happily, Justinian's reign also witnessed an early example of just how febrile Byzantine politics could become. The Nika Insurrection of 532 CE was one of the bloodiest events in the empire's history. Chariot racing was a favourite pastime in Constantinople, with four leading teams and their supporters each sporting a particular colour: the blues and the greens were top of the tree. More was at stake than exciting recreation. The different groups would attempt to influence religious and political affairs and had a bad habit of engaging in street violence. In 532, Justinian's refusal to extend a full pardon to two of the leaders of the blues and greens led to a week-long orgy of riots, house-razing and arson. Thousands were killed and as much as half of the city lay in ruins and rubble.

This almost got Justinian deposed, but he weathered the storm and set about rebuilding the city. Unfortunately, almost all the territorial gains he had made in the West were lost under his successors and the Byzantines' central dilemma had come into sharp focus. It was surrounded on all sides by enemies and for the next millennium, a ludicrous number of conflicts would have to be fought. The Sassanid War in the early 7th century drained the imperial coffers, with the Persians keeping up the pressure and deploying the sneakiest of tactics.

Emperor Maurice (r.582-602) had been an ally of the Persian ruler and when Maurice was killed by the ambitious military leader Phocas, Persia swore to avenge his death. But this was merely an excuse for intervening in the Byzantine Empire's politics. A decades-long war ensued, with the Persians managing to reach the gates of Constantinople. The pretense of good intentions soon evaporated and before long, the Persian ruler was describing the Byzantine emperor as his "vile and insensate slave".

Matters improved greatly under Heraclius (r.610-641 CE), who secured a famous victory over the Persians at the Battle of Nineveh in 627. Even his enemies had to concede that he was a ferocious warrior. As a Persian ruler once put it: "He fears these arrows and spears no more than would an anvil." At this very moment, however, the rise of Islamic power in the Near East was in full flow and, due to their financial weakness, both the Persian and Byzantine Empires were vulnerable. During the 7th and 8th centuries, Byzantium would lose Armenia, Syria, North Africa and, most devastatingly, the economically crucial Egypt. Affairs at home were hardly any rosier, with the disruptive quarrel over religious icons creating havoc from the reign of Leo III (r.717-41 CE) through much of the 8th and 9th centuries.

"Losing control in such a way almost got Justinian deposed, but he weathered the storm"

The arrival of the Macedonian dynasty (867-1056) represented another turning point, at least at first. Its founder, Basil I (r.867-886), managed to regain substantial territories but, as so often, his immediate successors squandered his legacy. Lands were lost and, throughout the period, Egypt was never reconquered. It also proved difficult to retake Jerusalem, which provoked a rather famous series of events known as the Crusades - though all the troops that flooded in from the West over the next few centuries were chiefly concerned with asserting their own interests and had no great desire to see the city being placed back in Byzantine hands.

The Macedonian period - particularly during the 10th century under the rule of Constantine VII (r.913-959) - did, however, represent one of the high watermarks in Byzantine cultural achievement: the Macedonian Renaissance. Perhaps no artefact better encapsulates this era's artistic achievements than the so-called

Belisarius, Justinian's bold general, would remain a favourite figure in art through the centuries



Joshua Roll, which depicted the biblical tale in an exquisite 11-foot parchment roll that demonstrates a spare but intoxicating use of colour.

One military superstar also emerged in this period: Basil II (r.976-1025), who managed to claw back Greece, the Balkans, Syria and Georgia. But as sure as eggs is eggs, new foes emerged. The Normans assaulted the empire's Sicilian outposts and, during the reign of Romanos IV Diogenes (r.1068-71), the Seljuk Turks inflicted a devastating defeat on the empire at the 1071 Battle of Manzikert. The whole of Anatolia would be lost in the wake of this crushing blow.

Yet again, however, Byzantine fortunes were rekindled with the arrival of a new dynasty: the Comnenid. Its greatest glories, under rulers such as Alexios I (r.1081-1118) and the unusually charitable and lenient John II (r.1118-43) lay in the realm of culture and the arts, but some progress was made on the territorial and military fronts. But, of course, they were followed by a run of some spectacularly incompetent emperors.

By now, the West had lost much of its respect for Byzantium: indeed, ever since the Frankish ruler Charlemagne had been declared as the Holy Roman emperor



John II Comnenus, known as John the Good, was an unusually kindly emperor

and the true successor to Rome in the 9th century, that respect had been steadily fading away. Nor did the great schism between the Eastern and Western Churches in 1054 - stemming from a confusing blend of theological differences - do much to improve relations. The spectacle of a pope and a patriarch of Constantinople mutually excommunicating one another would leave religious scars that endured for centuries. A republic such as Venice was simply waiting for an opportunity to enter the Byzantine sphere of influence and it came, perhaps rather surprisingly, courtesy of the Crusades.

Faced with threats from the east, the Byzantines were always hopeful of support from the West, but things went horribly wrong in 1204. A fourth Crusade was launched at the beginning of the 13th century and the original plan was for the crusaders to stop off at Constantinople en route, help restore an emperor, and receive financial and military support in return. Everything went swimmingly for a while, but when the restored emperor Alexios IV (r.1203-04) was killed, the empire was unable to honour its commitments and the enraged crusaders launched an assault on the city.

Following a siege, the city was sacked and, as once contemporary put it, the "tumult and noise were so great that it seemed as if the very earth and sea were melting together". Western control of Constantinople was established, the empire's territories were divided up between the Western powers and, over the following decades, Byzantine emperors suffered the indignity of ruling in little more than name from exile. Three so-called successor states, all claiming to continue the authentic Byzantine tradition, fell into competition.



The preaching of the Fourth Crusade, which would unexpectedly bring disaster to Constantinople

The tables turned under Michael VIII Palaiologos (r.1259-82), who retook Constantinople in 1261. But, as ever, new threats and challenges were on the horizon. The 14th century proved to be one of the worst in Byzantine history, with an absurd number of imperial depositions and civil wars. Into the bargain, the rise of the Ottoman Turks placed the empire in great jeopardy: for periods it was forced to become a vassal state of the Ottomans. Truly embarrassing incidents came thick and fast - the need to pawn the imperial crown jewels in 1343, or John V (r.1341-76) being detained for a spell as a debtor on a trip to Venice. Ultimately, in 1453, the death knell sounded.

Under Mehmed II, the Ottomans captured the city of Constantinople itself. The rich millennium-long drama that was the fabled Byzantine Empire had all but come to an end. Only the Trebizond Empire, based around northern Anatolia and the Crimea, remained. It had always claimed to be the heart of the true Roman empire, denouncing Byzantium's audacity, but it, too, was snuffed out by the Ottomans in 1461.

It's impossible to deny just how muddled and horrific Byzantine history could sometimes become: a tale of coups, pretenders and internecine strife. The list of usurpations and vengeful treatment of political rivals is almost

THE SLAYER OF THE BULGARS

The Byzantine Empire produced many military giants, but few could match Emperor Basil II

Basil II was only five when he came to the throne in 976 CE, with his mother acting as regent. He was soon asserting himself, however, and his eventful reign witnessed its share of pretenders and coup attempts. He survived them all.

Basil was not a particularly friendly man and was known for his gruffness and ascetic temperament. But while he was not especially likeable, he garnered a good deal of respect. His military successes were largely to thank for this.

His campaigning began badly when his armies were thrashed by the Bulgars at a mountain pass, but things soon looked up. From 997 CE he embarked on a series of epic conquests in Greece, the Balkans and Syria, and eventually served up revenge to the Bulgars at Kleidion in 1014. Following the battle, thousands of enemy captives were blinded or mutilated; within four years, Basil had secured complete control of Bulgar territory. Further successes followed in Armenia, and Basil's tomb said it all: "No one saw my spear lie idle."



Basil II in full conquering mode

absurd - Constantine III being poisoned, Justin II going mad, Constantine VI being blinded. Not to mention Michael V's castration, the lynching of Andronicus I, or the sons of Romanos I Lecapenos deposing their father and shipping him off to a monastery.

Restraint was rarely shown. Following the death of Heraclius, Constans I emerged victorious from the power struggle in 641 CE and behaved as any self-respecting Byzantine would when it came to his rivals for the throne. Heraclius' widow, Martina, had her tongue cut out, and his son, Heraclonas, had his nose chopped off. Both were then banished to the island of Rhodes.

"The rich millennium-long drama that was the fabled Byzantine Empire had all but come to an end"

The uncertainty of succession in the empire created many difficulties. It was not a simple father-to-son affair. An ambitious soldier could easily seize power and even those of the humblest origins had a shot at the top job. This, in a way, was meritocratic, but if an emperor failed to live up to expectations, his days were always numbered.

The wonder, though, is that through all this, the Eastern Empire usually retained its prestige and its economic power. The borders might shift, but a Byzantine solidus was a coin accepted across Europe and beyond. And let's not forget the astonishing cultural and artistic legacy - from art and literature to science and philosophy.

Nothing sums this up more elegantly than Hagia Sophia, the church that Justinian built and then rebuilt. As the ancient scholar Procopius explained, the emperor brought in "workmen from every land" and the results were "distinguished by indescribable beauty, excelling both in size and in the harmony of its measures". "No one," Procopius announced, "ever became weary of the spectacle."

Edward Gibbon, the great 18th-century historian, famously denounced the Byzantine Empire as a place of over-indulgence and petty infighting. It was, he wrote, a Roman empire "contracted and darkened", akin to the mighty Rhine ending in a trickle, losing itself in the sands before reaching the ocean. But there was a good deal more to the story than that.

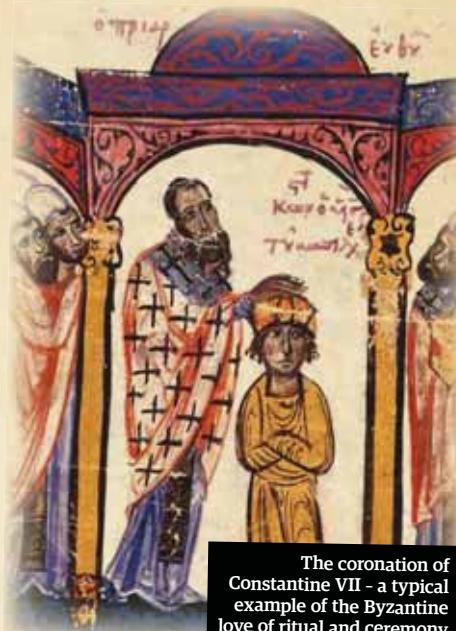
BOWING AND CURTSEYING

Political life in the Eastern Empire may have sometimes been chaotic, but it was always regulated by intricate rules and rituals

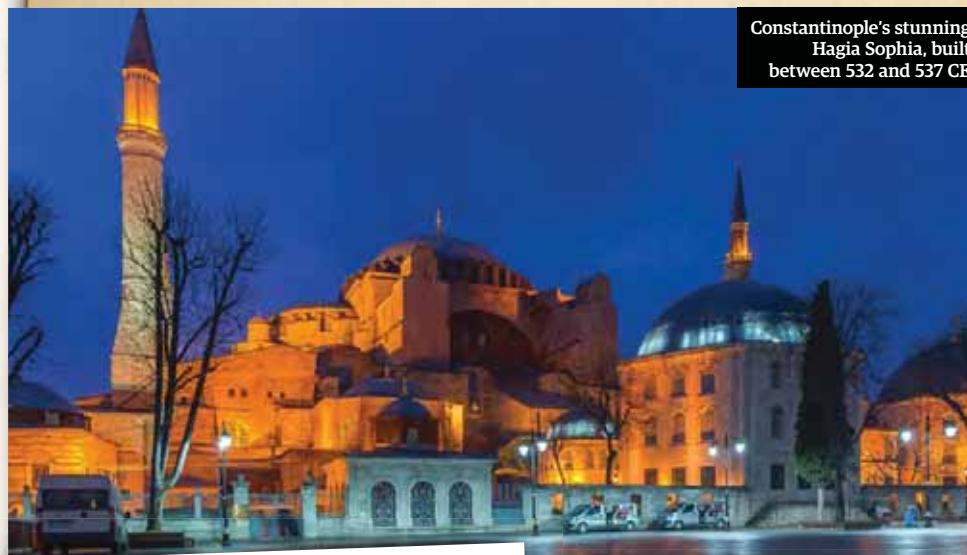
Byzantine emperors were obsessed with every detail of courtly life and protocol. Precedence and status were everything, as reflected in the 10th-century *De Ceremoniis*, or *Book of Ceremonies*, produced under Constantine VII.

Readers were instructed about precisely what should happen at religious events, feasts, coronations, marriages and celebrations of military victories. Rubrics concerning the reception of ambassadors and the appointment of officers were also explained. Strict pecking orders were established: how the leaders of other nations should be addressed, what clothes officials were entitled to wear, and what titles were to be used.

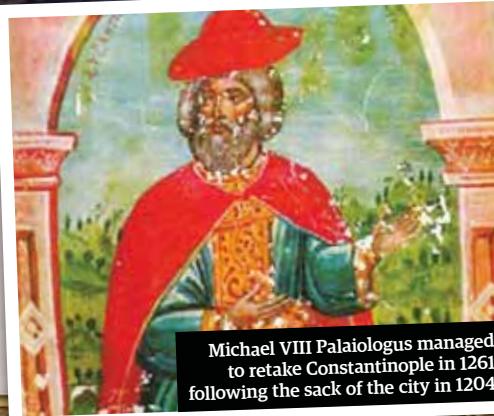
At the core of all this was the concept of order, *taxis*, which the Byzantines believed set them apart from barbarian disorder, or *ataxia*. Overseeing this were the emperors, who almost always erred on the side of autocracy, demanded total power in religion and politics, and expected complete deference. Stressing this image always made excellent sense for a subject who sought favour or advancement. One text happily played by the rules: "God has raised you, our reverend lord, to the throne of kingship and made you by his grace as you are called, a terrestrial God, to do and act as you will."



The coronation of Constantine VII - a typical example of the Byzantine love of ritual and ceremony



Constantinople's stunning Hagia Sophia, built between 532 and 537 CE



Michael VIII Palaiologus managed to retake Constantinople in 1261 following the sack of the city in 1204



The Joshua Roll, one of the most exquisite products of the cultural renaissance under the Macedonian dynasty



10 MOST DESPICABLE ROMANS

From crazed emperors to ruthless soldiers, meet some of the most depraved and treacherous characters that lurked in the darkest depths of Ancient Rome



oads, aqueducts, newspapers - these are just a few of the inventions Ancient Rome gave to the world. Not only was it home to the first shopping mall, but it also helped to create the system of social welfare that we use today, transforming an uncivilised old world into one of innovation and splendour.

But there is a dark and sinister underbelly of this renowned ancient civilisation; one that runs thick with corruption, deceit and blood.

A beacon of progress and luxury it may have been, but Rome housed some of the most depraved and disturbing people to ever grace the planet, making it one of the most dangerous places to live in the world.

From the world's first serial killer who rented her services out, to the teenage emperor whose idea of a good time was hiding lions in the beds of his guests, we examine some of the most menacing and memorable characters born of a world where almost anyone could lead, and where those in power could trust no one.

Gaius Verres c.115-43 BCE

The greed that brought Sicily to its knees

Profession Magistrate

Infamous for Destroying the lives of an entire nation

X Born to a father who was accused of corruption himself, Verres would grow up to become one of the most abhorrent personifications of the Roman Republic's depraved final years. He became a financial administrator to a consul, and when civil war broke out he used his power to embezzle military funds. In 80 BCE he joined the staff of Governor Dolabella of Cilicia, and indulged his passion for works of art by stripping the temples of their paintings and statues for his own collection. When Dolabella stood trial for his extortions, Verres gave evidence to get him convicted and received a pardon for his own crimes as a result.

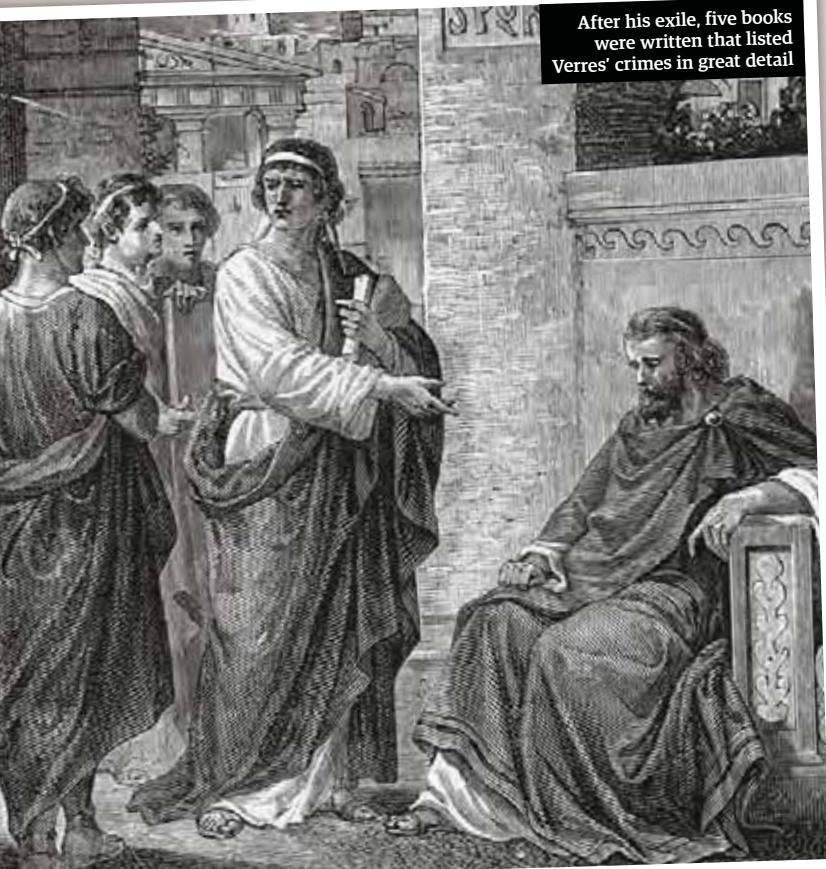
In 74 BCE he was appointed governor of Sicily, a rich and profitable province. The land had previously enjoyed a relatively peaceful and prosperous history, but Verres's appointment sent that

crashing down. When wealthy Sicilians died, Verres would use his corrupt judges to get a slice of the inheritance. If judges refused to comply they were swiftly killed.

He ordered grand statues to be built in his likeness, abolished a successful agricultural system, thereby throwing farmers into abject poverty, and turned a prosperous trading nation into one that struggled to feed its own citizens. His henchmen prowled the country for works of art for their master and seized whatever they liked - even brazenly stealing a public statue of Mercury.

Verres' luck finally ran out when he was made to return to Rome after the pleas of desperate Sicilians. Although he tried to buy his way out of his trial, he was ultimately forced into exile.

GREED	██████
CUNNING	██████
MADNESS	██████
DEPRAVITY	██████



Ancient Rome's shining light

The emperor who set an example

Roman emperors are often portrayed as being vain, greedy, bloodthirsty and downright insane, killing their rivals and having no concern for their people, but this isn't entirely true. One period of Roman history known as the "reign of the five good emperors" is notable, as all five men succeeded the throne by adoption, rather than birth, and had far more stable and successful rules than their blood-right counterparts. No one exemplifies this period more than Emperor Trajan.

After previous relations had been strained, Trajan worked closely with the Senate and delighted the public when he called many exiled Greek intellectuals back to Rome. He also encouraged the building of notable structures that transformed Rome's landscape, such as Trajan's Column and the Alcantara Bridge. He implemented many social-welfare policies and was honoured by the Senate as "the best ruler". Trajan was also a powerful and capable military commander, expanding the Roman Empire to its largest size. Trajan and his just rule were so revered by the Romans that every new emperor was hailed by the prayer: "Be luckier than Augustus and better than Trajan."



Lucius Cornelius Sulla 138-78 BCE

The dictator who dealt in fear and death

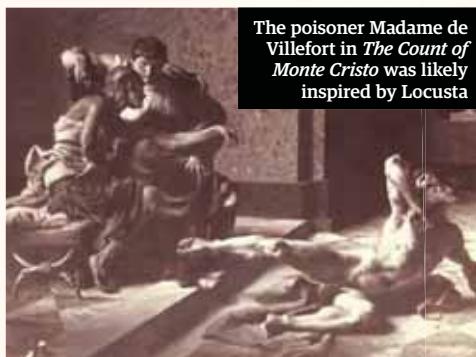
Profession Dictator

Infamous for Purging Rome of 9,000 people

IX Born into relative poverty, Sulla was led by his ruthless spirit to become a famed general and eventual dictator of the Rome. He was a beloved general among his troops, but he also had a ruthless and vicious streak that emerged in his proscription.

As soon as he grasped control of Rome, Sulla was determined to purge the land of anyone he perceived as an enemy. The Greek historian Plutarch wrote: "Sulla now began to make blood flow, and he filled the city with deaths without number or limit."

GREED	██████
CUNNING	██████
MADNESS	██████
DEPRAVITY	██████



The poisoner Madame de Villefort in *The Count of Monte Cristo* was likely inspired by Locusta

Locusta of Gaul

Unknown-69 CE

The world's first serial killer

Profession Killer for hire

Infamous for Poisoning Emperor Claudius

VIII Growing up in the quiet countryside of Gaul, Locusta learned much about the herbs and plants that grew around her home. Upon moving to Rome, she found her knowledge desired by ambitious men who wished to get rid of their rivals. She began a business as a professional poisoner and made a name for herself. In 54 CE she attracted her most influential patron: Agrippina the Younger, wife of Emperor Claudius. She requested help in killing her husband so her young son, Nero, could claim the throne.

After getting him drunk, they fed him poisoned mushrooms. He quickly suffered extreme stomach pains and died. Locusta's talents were required again when Nero ordered her to poison his stepbrother and rival to the throne, Britannicus. The boy went into mad convulsions, but Nero calmly told everyone present that he was epileptic. The dinner party continued and Britannicus died a few hours later.

Nero rewarded Locusta richly for her assistance, lavishing her with a grand villa and luxurious gifts. With the emperor on her side, her skills became so renowned that she set up a school where she bestowed her knowledge on eager students. Locusta even gave Nero a poison kit of his own to use in the event of taking his own life. Unfortunately, when Nero was condemned to death in 68 CE, he forgot the kit and had to use his own dagger. With her most powerful ally gone, Locusta was arrested and led through the city in chains before being executed.

GREED



CUNNING



MADNESS



DEPRAVITY

Marcus Perperna Vento *Unknown-72 BCE*

History's worst dinner host

Profession Statesman

Infamous for Betraying and murdering a guest

VII When the military faction he belonged to was defeated by Lucius Cornelius Sulla, Perperna fled Rome with a small army and a wealth of money. With a greedy desire to rule, he decided to wage war against Quintus Caecilius Metellus Pius of Hispania, the region he had escaped to. But Perperna was a terrible leader and his soldiers soon rebelled against him, demanding to be handed over to Sertorius, Hispania's ruler. Facing his own death, Perperna agreed with great humiliation.

Still licking his scars, Perperna could only watch on as Sertorius grew stronger and stronger. Perperna encouraged the disdain of his fellow nobles and senators, hoping to feed on their jealousy for his own gain. Uprisings and revolts plagued the region, as the popular and eloquent Sertorius struggled to find the source of discontent.

When Sertorius won yet another victory, Perperna invited him to a feast in his honour. The celebration, usually an occasion of much festivity, was specially designed to offend and disgust the famed general. Pushed to breaking point, Sertorius resigned to silently ignoring the humiliation.

Perperna used this opportunity to set his minions upon the unsuspecting guest, slaughtering him before he had a chance to defend himself. Perperna's retribution was swift and brutal: faced with the anger of an even more powerful enemy - Pompey - he hopelessly pled for his life, offering all of Sertorius' papers. Pompey agreed, but when he was given the papers he burned them and executed the betrayer.

GREED



CUNNING



MADNESS



DEPRAVITY



Shocking pastimes

The depraved and vulgar activities that filled a Roman's spare time

Purging at feasts

The decadent, grand feasts of Ancient Rome are no secret. More unknown, however, is their penchant for vomiting during these feasts. Wealthy Romans loved their food so much that when they were full, they would induce vomiting so they could continue eating. This was considered a part of fine dining, and slaves were present to clear up any vomit that surfaced during the feast.

Slave abuse

The slave trade in Ancient Rome was a cornerstone of the economy, and the slaves themselves were treated as little less than tradable goods. As they were regarded as property, Roman law didn't view slave sex as infidelity. Seen as having "no persona", Roman slaves would be sold at auctions or even in shops. If a slave was deemed as having defects, the buyer could take the slave back within six months for a refund.

Lewd graffiti

Some of the most impressive works of art originate from Ancient Rome, but they were also involved in a different art form - graffiti - and the messages were just as rude as today. Experts were surprised by the amount of graffiti on the walls of Pompeii. The messages include boasting, insults and profanities, such as "Phleros is a eunuch", "Celadus makes the girls moan" and "The boss isn't worth a rat's ass!"



In a most treacherous plot, Sejanus secretly seduced Drusus' wife and together they slowly poisoned the heir

Sejanus 20 BCE - 31 CE The emperor's puppet master

Profession Soldier

Infamous for Purging Rome of any who dared defy him

VI Born into the lower upper social class of the Roman Republic, Sejanus was led by pure ambition and drive to succeed. Slowly but surely Sejanus began to creep closer to Emperor Tiberius, and by 23 CE he held great influence over the decisions of the emperor, with Tiberius referring to his confidant as "socius laborum" or "my partner in my toils."

Sejanus consolidated his power by swiftly eliminating any potential opponents, but his primary target was the emperor's son, Drusus. The rivalry between the two was no secret, and Drusus had publicly punched Sejanus during an argument, voicing his objection that a "stranger was invited to assist in the government while the emperor's son was alive." Sejanus secretly seduced Drusus's wife and together they slowly poisoned the heir until he died of apparent natural causes in 23 CE.

Struck by grief, Tiberius bestowed most of his power to Sejanus. With effective control of Rome, Sejanus led a brutal purge of senators and powerful men. During the purge, he managed to exile the ambitious widow of Germanicus, Agrippina, and two of her sons, who seemingly starved to death. With statues erected in his honour and his rivals crippled by fear and tyranny, Sejanus was Rome's most powerful man.

Tiberius was alerted to the growing threat and summoned Sejanus to a Senate meeting where he was ambushed and arrested. He was strangled and his body cast down the Gemonian stairs of execution, where a riotous mob tore it to pieces. So furious were the people with Sejanus' deception that they hunted down and killed anyone associated with him.

GREED
CUNNING
MADNESS
DEPRAVITY



Marcus Licinius Crassus
115-53 BCE

The man who amassed wealth from others misfortune

profession General

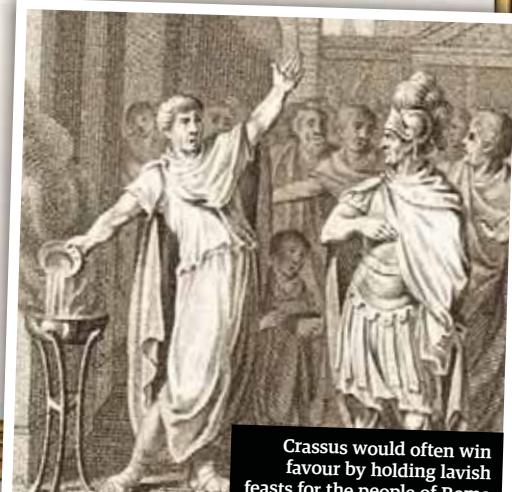
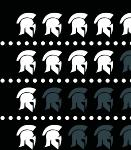
infamous for Executing 6,000 slaves

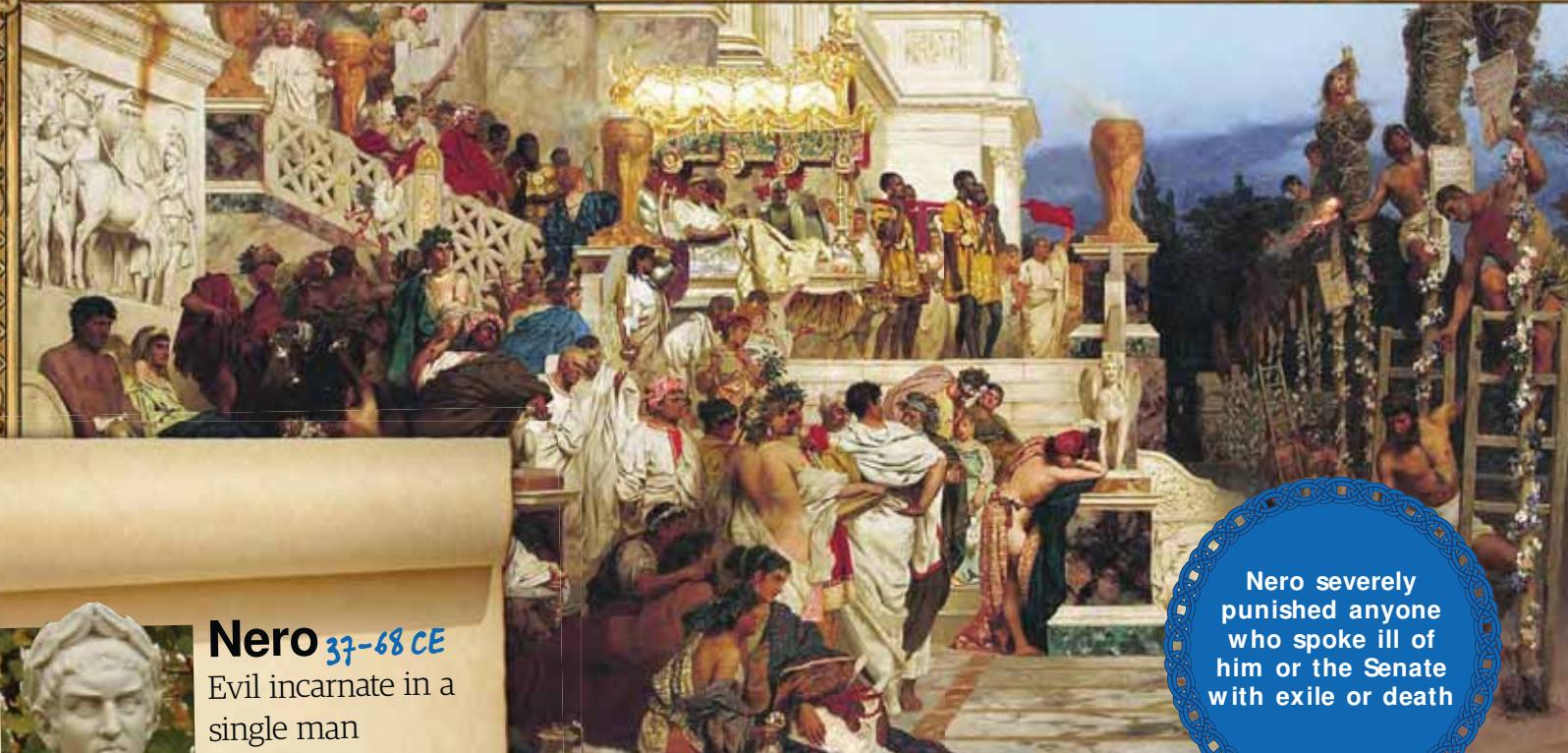
V Crassus is thought to be the richest man in the history of Rome, with an estimated 200 million sestertii, or about £5.4 billion (\$8.4 billion), but he did not earn his fortune from entirely moral means.

One of his moneymaking enterprises was control of the only fire department in Rome. When a fire broke out, Crassus and his team would arrive at the site and haggle with the owner of the property, offering to purchase the doomed building at an outrageously low price. The owner would have to look on hopelessly as their home burned, and more often than not would hand over the property to Crassus. Then Crassus' slaves would move in and eliminate the fire. Once Crassus had acquired the house, he would rent it back to the previous owner for a profit.

As his wealth poured in, Crassus was able to buy his way into political power, serving as a member of the First Triumvirate with Julius Caesar and Pompey. Crassus also led his own army against the slave uprising of Spartacus. He controlled his force with fear and when any soldier fled from battle, he executed one out of every ten men. When victory was finally achieved, Crassus demonstrated his brutal and bloody streak by crucifying 6,000 of Spartacus' followers.

GREED
CUNNING
MADNESS
DEPRAVITY





Nero 37-68 CE

Evil incarnate in a single man

Profession Emperor

Infamous for The mass slaughter of Christians

IV One of history's most infamous leaders, Nero won his throne through murder, and death is what he brought to Rome. Although his mother's actions had helped him become emperor, Nero became wary of her influence. He attempted to kill her in a shipwreck, but when she survived he ordered her assassination, masking it as suicide.

He continued his bloody reign by divorcing his first wife before having her beheaded, apparently bringing her head to his second wife. She didn't fare much better, as Nero reportedly kicked her to death while she was pregnant.

On a quest for ultimate power, Nero punished anyone who spoke ill of him or the Senate with exile or death. He hunted down his rivals and had them killed. When he was accused of treason, he simply had the accusers executed, too.

A frequent visitor of bars and brothels, when a great fire decimated the city, Nero spent a vast amount of the empire's money constructing a grand palace featuring a 30-metre (98-foot)-tall statue of himself. To retain some popularity, Nero blamed the fire on Christians, who faced horrific persecution as a result. They were arrested, impaled, torn apart by vicious dogs and even burned as torches to light his gardens.

GREED



CUNNING



MADNESS



DEPRAVITY



Nero severely punished anyone who spoke ill of him or the Senate with exile or death



Elagabalus 203-211

The boy emperor and his deadly practical jokes

III The reports of the cruelty of this notorious emperor are impossible to ascertain, but Elagabalus was certainly one of the most controversial and malicious Romans ever.

Becoming emperor at just 14 years old, he flouted Roman traditions and quickly created a multitude of enemies. Early in his reign, he replaced the head of the Roman god Jupiter



GREED



CUNNING



MADNESS



DEPRAVITY

Caligula 12-41 CE

The insane emperor who proclaimed himself a god

profession Emperor

infamous for Throwing innocent crowds to the lions in the Coliseum

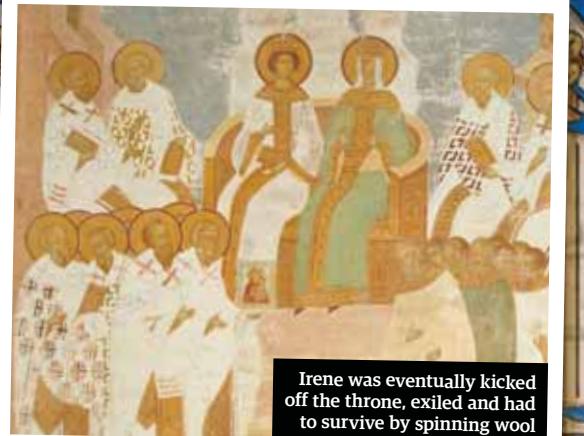
I Caligula's reign was not bloody or vicious at first. When he entered Rome as emperor, he was hailed by adoring crowds as "our baby" and "our star", and the first few months were relatively peaceful. But in October 37 CE he suffered an illness that seemed to completely alter his mental state. He began joining in the brutal imperial tradition of killing off anyone he saw as a rival, including his cousin, adopted son and possibly his grandmother. He kept his uncle Claudius alive but tormented him relentlessly with cruel practical jokes and public humiliations. The public weren't spared from his cruelty either, as people were executed without trial or forced to commit suicide.

Desperate for money, Caligula would also target people for execution purely to seize their property, and even auctioned the lives of gladiators at shows. Despite the financial worries, he splashed cash by constructing two of the biggest ships of the ancient

world, with the largest the equivalent of a floating palace, replete with marble floors. His obsession with his public image took a controversial turn when he appeared in public dressed as various Roman gods, and even referred to himself as a god, both in official documents and in person. Two temples were erected in his honour and Caligula removed the heads of statues of ancient gods, replacing them with his own.

Caligula's reputation for outrageous and despicable actions was encouraged when he found himself bored while watching the games at the amphitheatre, so ordered his guards to throw in some of the crowd to be eaten by animals. It was also reported that he enjoyed chewing up the testicles of his victims while they were still attached to them. Caligula was so universally loathed that he became the first Roman emperor to be assassinated, by being stabbed over and over again. The assassins even killed his one-year-old daughter by bashing her head against a wall to ensure his bloodline would be destroyed for good.

GREED	██████
CUNNING	██████
MADNESS	██████
DEPRAVITY	██████



Irene was eventually kicked off the throne, exiled and had to survive by spinning wool

Irene of Athens 752-803

The empress who placed ultimate power above all else

profession Empress

infamous for Blinding her son

Inspired by the legend of Saint Irene, the empress of Byzantium, Irene of Athens was a saint in the Eastern Orthodox Church for her support of idols. Irene of Athens also had a much darker and bloodier streak. Although she came from a noble family, she was an unlikely bride of Leo IV, emperor of the Byzantine Empire. When her husband died, Irene became regent for her son, Constantine - just ten years old at the time. A group of powerful figures took the emperor's death as a chance to rebel, but Irene demonstrated her quick and brutal justice by arresting them and forcing them to become monks, making it impossible for them to rule.

Although she was regent, Irene clearly established her dominance by having herself, not her son, on the first coins printed during his reign, printing his name on the less prominent side of the coin. When Constantine came of age, Irene showed no signs of giving up power, but her son had inherited her ambition, so a political battle ensued between the two.

The empress arrested her son's men and had them flogged and exiled, as well as any supporters. She also persuaded the army to swear to not accept him as emperor until she died. When Constantine was distracted by the birth of his son, she began to plot a way to become sole ruler. She had her supporters seize her son and imprison him, before he was blinded by having his eyes gouged out, eliminating any chance of him ascending the throne. He died either from his injuries or later in exile. With all her rivals stamped out and family dead, Irene finally had the ultimate control she so desired.

GREED	██████
CUNNING	██████
MADNESS	██████
DEPRAVITY	██████

THE ROMAN EMPIRE'S LAST STAND

For 600 years, Islamists dreamed of seizing Constantinople, once the wealthiest city in the world. In 1453, both sides prepared for a decisive showdown

Words David Crookes





Sultan Mehmed II took his position on a small mound in sight of the walls of the ancient city of Constantinople. Those tasked with defending the city - the stronghold of Orthodox Christianity - from the waves of invaders that threatened her could clearly see his location as they peered across from the city walls over an incredible number of tents situated barely 230 metres away.

The tents were arranged in clusters. At the centre of each was the makeshift home of an officer, on top of each a defiant flag fluttering in the wind against the Sea of Marmara. The 21-year-old sultan's ceremonial red-and-gold tent lay further back, its grandeur befitting that of the Ottoman Empire's leader. The sight of some 60,000 soldiers together with thousands more helping to keep them well tooled and fed was chilling for the city's inhabitants. For the leader

of Constantinople - the Byzantine emperor Constantine XI Palaiologos - the purpose of the incredible gathering within spitting distance of the city to which he had dedicated his life was clear. War was inevitable and his forces were outnumbered ten to one.

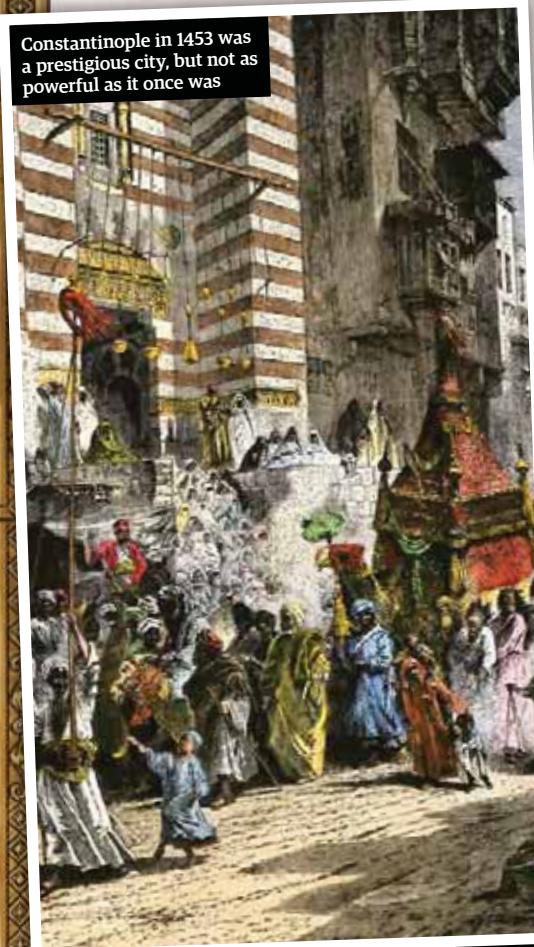
Mehmed was conscious of the need for a swift war on Constantinople, given the logistics involved with keeping such a large army well fed and healthy. He had made Constantine an offer: surrender the city, and he could keep his life and rule in the smaller town of Mystras. The emperor refused: "To surrender the city to you is beyond my authority or anyone else's who lives in it, for all of us, after taking the mutual decision, shall die out of free will without sparing our lives."

On 6 April 1453, the first attack came, light artillery firing at Constantinople. Soldiers pushed forwards, trying to break through the

city's walls, but the defenders proved strong. They repelled the invading army, causing many casualties. Even as cracks appeared in the walls and fortresses on Bosphorus were taken, Mehmed realised it wasn't going to be easy to break the city. For that, even greater force was needed, so he called upon something with huge firepower; a weapon that was to shake Constantinople like an earthquake.

Constantine XI understood the importance of his city. It was the gateway to Europe, an impregnable walled city that for 1,000 years had been besieged 23 times with just one success, at the hands of the Christian knights of the Fourth Crusade in 1203. Crucially, Constantinople - so important to the Eastern Roman Empire, or Byzantine Empire as it later became known - was the centre for trade and previously the world's





largest and richest city. It had stood firm in the face of the Ottoman Empire that had expanded all around it, leaving it isolated in the middle of Europe and Asia.

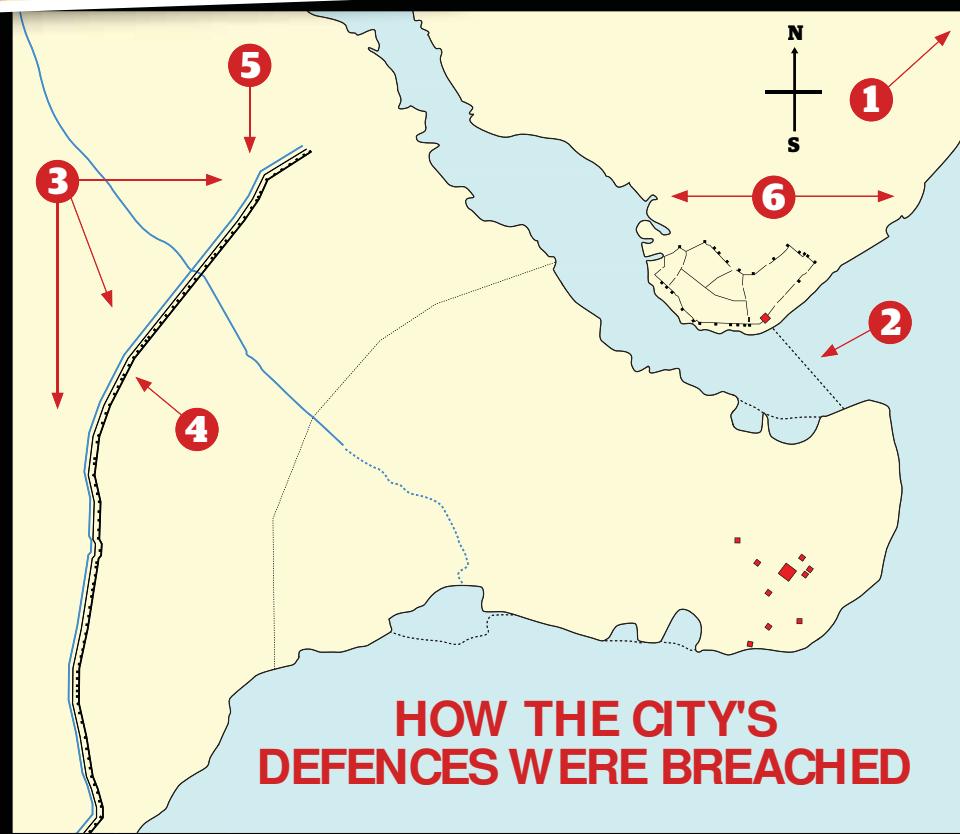
Constantinople had become the focus of much jealousy among rival leaders who wanted to conquer what had become the last outpost of the once-mighty Roman Empire. Followers of Islam had laid siege to Constantinople between 674 and 678, trying again in 717 and 718 in line with the belief that its remaining strength would prevent Islam's reach into Europe. Christian Europe feared the fall of Constantinople, believing it would open the way for Islamic dominance. But even though the city saw off the attempted conquest, the death of Islamic martyrs had helped make it a holy place and the determination to try again in the future burned deep.

Yet for hundreds of years the main threat to Constantinople as the centre for the Orthodox Church had come from Rome, the centre of the Catholic Church. The Fourth Crusade had devastated Constantinople's power and riches, and so by 1453 it was a pale shadow of its former self. By this point, the Byzantine Empire - which at its height had included most of the Mediterranean coast - consisted of Constantinople and a few square miles outside. It might have lost its true power, but its location and history meant it was still desirable. Mehmed wanted it badly.

The sultan was determined to succeed where his predecessors had failed. He had come to power thanks to his father, Murat, who had negotiated a ten-year truce with Christian crusaders intent on invasion. Mehmed had come to hold a desire to be the heir to the Roman Empire and extend his influence. Like rulers before and after him, he wanted one faith, one empire and one sovereignty in the world and by 1453, the time was right.

Constantine XI had none of the power of those that had gone before him, and the city, with its population of 100,000, was bankrupt. Constantinople had been paying vast sums to the Ottoman Empire as a way of avoiding invasion but this only served to financially cripple it. Now the enemy was camped on its doorstep, ready to unleash hell. The 49-year-old Constantine knew the chances of his small army holding out were slim but he vowed to fight to his last breath.

Constantine had made representations to the pope, knowing that an attack by the Ottoman forces could only be held off for so long. They needed reinforcements from the West to help tackle the threat. A union between the two Churches was celebrated at the end of 1452, but despite the promise of warships, none arrived in the following months. With no help coming, Constantine stepped up the work of repairing and reinforcing the city's walls.



1 Rumeli Hisarı (Fortress of Europe)

Winter 1451 Nicknamed Boğazkesen (meaning throat-cutter), Mehmed II ordered the building of a magnificent castle with 7.6-metre-thick walls. Situated at the narrowest point of the Bosphorus strait, its inhabitants used it to cut supplies to Constantinople.

2 The Chain

2 April 1453 Although the chain had been constructed centuries earlier, Constantine XI ensured it was strung across the mouth of the Golden Horn in Constantinople as the Ottoman army camped on his doorstep. It prevented enemy ships from entering the inlet.

3 Enemy Camp

2 April 1453 The enemy Ottoman Turks, together with a European army, camped outside the city walls. The Europeans were to the north of the river, the Janissaries in the middle protecting Mehmed, and the Anatolian army further down.

4 Theodosian Wall

6 April to 29 May 1453 This 6.5-kilometre stretch of land-locked wall was the primary target for the advancing enemy. They struck it with cannon fire and tried to breach it several times before finally succeeding on 29 May 1453, seizing the city.

5 The Moat

The moat had been added in the 5th century and it was an extra barrier between any invading army and the city walls. It was around 20 metres wide and seven metres deep. The Ottoman Turks tried desperately to fill it to allow for a safe and easy passage.

6 Bypassing the chain

22 April 1453 With the chain blocking access to the Golden Horn, Mehmed II ordered the ships to be carried over land instead. In the dead of night, they were pulled over difficult ground using log rollers and relaunched into the water, much to Constantine's surprise.



THE EVOLUTION OF SIEGE WEAPONS

Battering Ram

First used Unknown

Strengths A part of warfare since ancient history, battering rams have been highly effective in smashing down fortifications. They started as simple heavy logs but swinging mechanisms later came into play.



Weaknesses Although great at impacting stone and brick, they were next to useless against thicker walls. Soldiers would also have to get up close to cause damage. Gunpowder and cannons replaced this clumsy method.

Siege Tower

First used 11th century BCE

Strengths Moveable siege towers allowed soldiers to scale curtain walls since they were of the same size or higher. In later years, the bottom part would be covered to allow for covert work such as filling in moats.



Weaknesses Since they were made from wood, they were vulnerable to collapse. In Constantinople, the siege towers were set alight by the defenders using Greek fire – a weapon frequently used by the Byzantines in naval battles.

Cannon

First used 12th century CE

Strengths Cannons were effective against even the strongest fortifications as the super-cannons utilised in Constantinople showed. Artillery fire was used heavily in World War I and lives on in a modern form today.



Weaknesses The need to reload them and ensure they are aimed correctly makes them cumbersome. In Constantinople, it would take some three hours to reload the super-cannon and it was a tiring, manual process.

Catapult

First used 4th century BCE

Strengths Catapults were able to propel missiles over the fortified walls of cities and castles, striking death and fear into the heart of a population. They could also be used to smash the walls with large stones.



Weaknesses When defences are strong, the effects of catapults can be neutralised. And no matter what type of catapult was used – some were tension drive, others were spoon-like – they were cumbersome to move and position.

The sultan promised his men they could loot the city after they took it

The last outpost of the Roman Empire was ringed by 19 kilometres of perimeter walling, most of it facing the edge of the sea. On the northern side was a chain that had been placed across the mouth of the Golden Horn, the primary inlet leading to a large harbour-like body of water. It prevented enemy ships from sailing past the northern part of Constantinople and was an important part of the city's defences. Constantine's strategy was to put a greater emphasis on the 6.5 kilometres of land-locked perimeter wall, but he didn't know about his enemy's latest weapon.

Mehmed enjoyed the discovery of new things and so was rather taken by a proposal to create a cannon larger than any other that had been built. This, he surmised, would be perfect to smash the famous walls of Constantinople.

Gunpowder had been available since around the 11th century - it appears on the Song dynasty text *Wujing Zongyao* - so its power was not unknown. The Ottomans' new weapon was different, though. It was devised by an engineer called Orban, who had visited Constantinople from the kingdom of Hungary and was taken on by Constantine to develop new weaponry. The infrequent payments forced him to seek employment with Mehmed and he promised the sultan he could make a weapon large enough to fire a huge stone that would demolish the city's walls.

Orban was given an abundance of money and the materials to build his super cannon. It took him three months to make the giant weapon, the end result being a monster that was 8.2 metres long and capable of hurling a 272-kilogram stone ball over an incredible 1.6 kilometres. When it hit the walls of Constantinople, the shock waves were immense. Constantine's men struggled in the face of the onslaught as it smashed into the stone surroundings, causing parts to crumble to the ground, leaving gaping holes in the city's defences. Their respite came in the three hours

Sultan Mehmed had been planning the sacking of Constantinople for years



"He promised he could make a weapon large enough to fire a huge stone that would demolish the city's walls"

it took to reload the cannon - they could use the time to repair the wall with mud and other materials to hand. The defenders draped animal skins over the walls, which, together with the mud, helped to cushion subsequent blows to that area.

The noise and incredible shaking of the walls and ground as each ball smashed into the city's walls caused as much psychological damage as it did physical. The pounding went on for days. Constantine was helped by Giovanni Giustiniani and his army of 700 professional soldiers from the island of Chios. Giustiniani was instrumental in keeping the walls repaired and Constantinople somehow continued to hold strong. By now, the battle had raged for 12 days.

One of the major aims for Mehmed's army was to fill the moat surrounding the city walls so that access could be quickly gained but Constantine's men emptied them at night. Even so, there had been enough damage and headway for a second stab at taking over Constantinople on 18 April, but this was repelled.

One of the most effective pre-war plans enacted by the Ottomans was the building of a large castle on the European side of Constantinople, close to the city. Finished well in time for the siege, the Ottomans nicknamed it Boğazkesen, which translates as the 'throat cutter'. Taking just four months to complete, it could be used to control sea traffic on the

WHO WAS THE CITY NAMED AFTER?

The city was named after Constantine the Great, the Roman emperor from 306 to 337 CE. He had battled against Emperor Maxentius for control of the West in 312 and won. It was a victory that allowed him, as the first emperor to convert to Christianity, to lead the way for religious tolerance.

Under Constantine, the empire flourished, eventually being unified in 324. Constantine continued to look east and established New Rome in Byzantium. The Romans renamed this Constantinople in his honour and it came to be the capital of what became known as the Byzantine Empire.

Bosphorus strait. The Ottoman Turks could cut supplies to Constantinople by blasting away at defiant ships trying to sail past, using large cannons situated on the water's edge. The city was dangerously isolated.

But just as the Ottoman Turks had made preparations, so too had Constantinople. The defenders had strung a chain across the mouth of the Golden Horn. By blocking access to the waterway, the defenders were able to prevent an onslaught from that direction. They had proved adept at seeing off the Ottomans' naval advances and there had been close ship-to-ship combat during which the Byzantines emerged victorious. Yet cutting off the Golden Horn meant they could concentrate their efforts on defending the land-lying areas of the wall instead.

The sultan's solution was ingenious. Mehmed looked at the chain and surveyed the land close by. He decided the answer would be to haul the

"Constantine vowed to defend his city to the death"

ships over land from the sea to the water cut off by the chain. And so it began. Soldiers and oxen pulled at the ships, sending them over pre-laid rollers greased with animal fat. Scores of ships were hauled over in a mammoth overnight task. Surprised and aghast, the defenders were unsure what to do. The ships were now able to fire at the scantily guarded wall to the side of the Golden Horn. Within hours, great damage was being caused and the victorious Mehmed showed his ruthless side. When a group of defenders managed to escape from one sunken ship, his punishment was to have them impaled.

The high-stakes game of cat and mouse continued, and Mehmed ordered the Ottomans to mine under the city. On 16 May, Christian soldiers heard underground activity and went to investigate. Their discovery of miners put them on high alert and, having sorted the initial problem, they tried to think up effective ways to spot further attempts. John Grant, a Scot who had found himself in Constantinople, recommended placing buckets of water around the walls of the city. A ripple on the surface of the water would alert them to possible mining. It worked.

The attacks may have been repelled but the defenders were getting tired and their walls were a mess. On 27 May, Mehmed made the decision to throw everything at the city. Ottoman forces bombarded the walls relentlessly, causing heavy

damage. They were fast and furious, giving the defenders little time to make repairs. Mehmed then prepared his men to march forward. They were, he said, not to touch the structure of the city - he wanted Constantinople to remain as intact as possible so that it could form his capital. They could loot and enslave, though. With this promise, the army spent 28 May getting ready, praying, resting and running through their tactics.

Constantine prepared his city, encouraged his soldiers to fight to the last man and vowed to defend his city to the death. There were just 4,000 men left to hold Constantinople - half that at the start of the siege. On 29 May, after a 47-day siege, the invaders surged forward, scaling the walls. They were pushed back by the defenders who knocked away ladders and used hot oil to scald them. Two waves of attack were repelled.

But Mehmed's Janissaries - Christians picked up by the Ottomans as children and trained as fighters - broke through, their elite training enabling them to breach the walls after hours of fighting. There were hand-to-hand battles in the narrow streets of the city. The defenders knew they were overpowered. Screams filled the night air. As Ottoman soldiers poured into Constantinople, the city was overwhelmed.

The Ottomans flung open the great bronze doors of Saint Sophia and massacred large numbers of worshippers. With priests dying by the altar and with a vast number of prisoners being rounded up, the end was upon the city. Their emperor tore off his imperial ornaments so he looked like any normal soldier, saying, "The city is fallen and I am still alive", and charging to his death. The invaders tied up any enemy they didn't slaughter, grabbed women and fought over the most attractive of them. Children were led into slavery and the city was ransacked of what little it had left. After more than 1,000 years of a glorious Constantinople, the last outpost of the Roman Empire was no more.

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?

Although Christians aimed to reclaim Constantinople after its fall, such ambitions fizzled out in the 16th century. Many of the Byzantine Empire's learned men had left and sought out new inspiration, flooding Europe with teachings and culture, and Constantinople was transformed into an Islamic city.

Constantinople - renamed Istanbul - became attractive to Muslims, Jews and Christians, and they lived in harmony in a city that Mehmed II had rebuilt both structurally and culturally. With the Ottoman Empire in decline, the 20th century brought changes. World War I meant Istanbul came to be occupied by Britain, France and Italy, leading to the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923.





Built from stone and concrete, the Colosseum once held games that would last up to 100 days

PLACES TO VISIT

The Roman Empire reached far and wide, leaving us to admire wonderful architecture across its former territories

Words David Crookes



The Roman Empire may have fallen many centuries ago but it left an architectural impression, not only in Italy, but across the Mediterranean region and Western Europe. Able to create amazing buildings utilising muscle power and skill, Roman architects went toe to toe with the Ancient Greeks in developing styles that have stood the test of time.

Not only that, their structures were built to last. From temples and triumphal arches to basilicas and baths (and all those amphitheatres and monuments in between), the Romans constructed power in concrete form, and that's no exaggeration. Those domes, arches and vaults were crafted to make people gasp at the grandeur of it all. By making concrete from volcanic ash, lime and seawater to bind rock fragments, they also made a substance so good, it's still far superior to the modern equivalent.

But then the Romans were an innovative bunch. Unreinforced concrete created the largest dome of its kind, topping the Pantheon. The Romans' use of the arch also allowed for larger, more complex constructions. Their aqueducts were practical yet pretty. And has there been a better stadium than the Colosseum for sheer spectacle in and of itself? No wonder the Romans built so many roads! Their architecture just had to be seen.

THE COLOSSEUM

Rome, Italy

The Colosseum is a sight to behold. Not only was it the Roman Empire's first permanent amphitheatre, it remains the largest ever built. Constructed between 72 and 80 CE during the reign of Emperor Vespasian, it soon became a key part of Roman life and regularly entertained more than 50,000 spectators.

The building's statistics are certainly impressive. Towering some 48 metres (157 feet) high, it was accessed via 76 numbered public entrances, allowing crowds to quickly gather around an interior arena space measuring a whopping 87 by 55 metres (287 by 180 feet). Spectators were protected from the sun by a huge velarium – an awning that covered the amphitheatre's three tiers of seating. Beneath the floor were passages and rooms which housed the animals and gladiators who would provide the blockbuster spectacles.

Time hasn't been too kind to the Colosseum. Visitors are today faced with a building once heavily pillaged for building material that, in tandem with natural deterioration, has destroyed a sizeable chunk of the structure. But what remains is vast and nonetheless hugely impressive. So while gladiators may not fight to the death on a sandy, blood-soaked floor any more, and the arena no longer gets flooded with water for mock sea battles, it's still possible to sense the colossal tension that once dripped across this gigantic structure. It's Rome's must-see sight.



The baths are no longer safe to take a dip in, but visitors can try some mineral-rich spa water from the more recently constructed drinking fountains



ROMAN BATHS

Bath, UK

The appeal of the natural hot springs that bubbled out of the ground in what we today know as Bath was apparent long before the Romans began their conquest of Britain in 43 CE. An Iron Age Celtic tribe called the Dobunni worshipped the goddess Sulis in this particular neck of the woods and so the Romans, some 30 years or so later, developed Aquae Sulis ('the waters of Sulis') as a fashionable religious spa complex.

There are three hot springs, the main one sending water topping 46 degrees Celsius (115 degrees Fahrenheit) into a Roman-built stone pool lined with lead, known as the Great Bath. Now situated below the modern street level, it's 1.6 metres (5.2 feet) deep and fills up with 1,170,000 litres (309,080 gallons) every single day. The water is affected by green algae today as a result of the 20-metre- (66-foot)-high arched roof having long gone, leaving the water glistening in direct sunlight.

Even so, it's a fascinating centrepiece and a testament to great Roman plumbing given that excess water still drains into the River Avon. In addition, there's a terrace that's studded with statues of Roman figures, albeit added in the Victorian era. You can also visit the remains of the Roman Temple of Sulis Minerva or take a wander around the museum to learn more about this popular historic attraction.

ARCHES

○ *Arch of Septimius Severus*

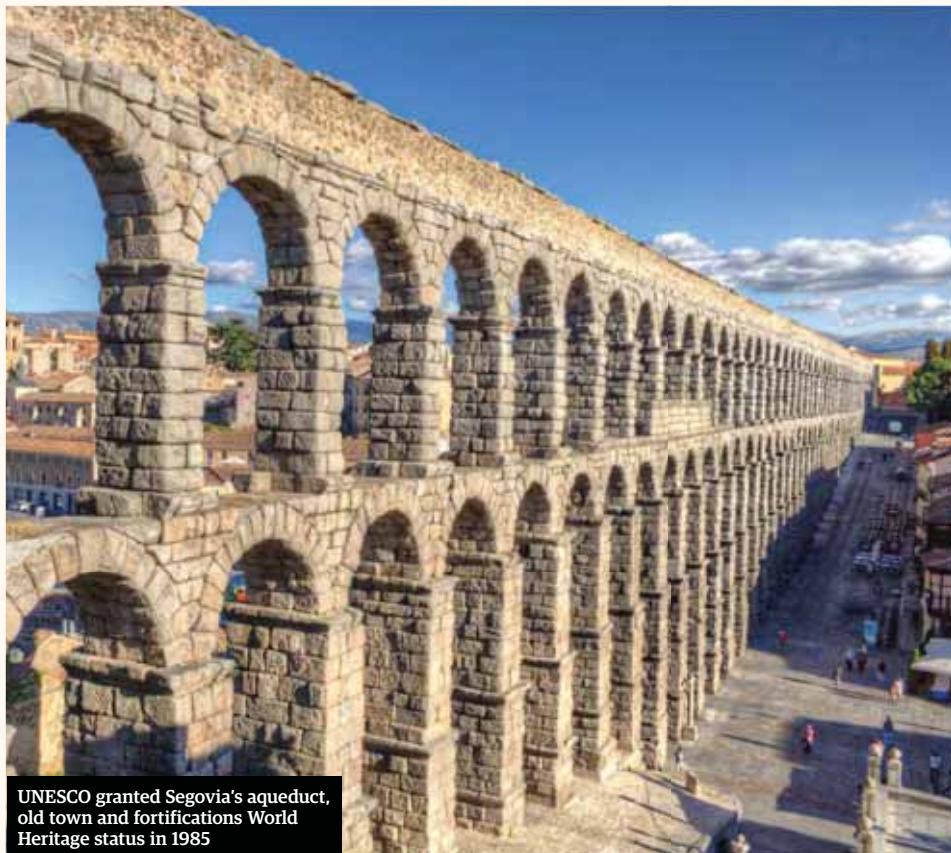


Just to confuse, there are two arches bearing this name. One is in Rome and was completed in 203 CE and the other is in Leptis Magna, Libya (pictured). Both commemorate the emperor's victories over the Parthian Empire, but the latter has four identical elevations.

○ *Arch of Constantine*



Commissioned by the Roman Senate in 315 CE in honour of Emperor Constantine I following his victory at the Battle of Milvian Bridge, this arch is located next to the Colosseum. The largest of the three archways is 11.5m (38ft) high.



UNESCO granted Segovia's aqueduct, old town and fortifications World Heritage status in 1985

AQUEDUCT OF SEGOVIA

Segovia, Spain

Aqueducts may be viewed as functional structures, built merely for the purpose of channelling fresh water to a populated area. But when the Aqua Appia was built to supply water to Rome, it was also clear that they could be visually arresting, too. Aside from being amazing feats of engineering, the fact that aqueducts were so bold, so large and so obvious was actually a show of strength. The mighty Romans did not feel threatened, and knew they could run these open channels of water without fear anyone would dare tamper with them.

Which brings us to this aqueduct in Spain, which is believed to have been built around the 1st or 2nd century CE. It slices through the city of Segovia and towers 28.5 metres (94 feet) above her citizens at one point, allowing light through two tiers of arches. What is remarkable is that no mortar was used between any of its 24,000 granite blocks. It's also been able to stand firm even though modern traffic has thundered through some of the arches over many years. The Romans sure knew how to build.

PULA ARENA

Pula, Croatia

Once people set eyes on the Colosseum, or at least caught wind of its splendour, there was a demand for other cities to have their own amphitheatres. There are some fine examples across the old Roman territories – the one built in the Arles in southern France in 90 CE seated 20,000 and housed a fortress in the Middle Ages – but Pula Arena in Croatia is arguably more impressive.

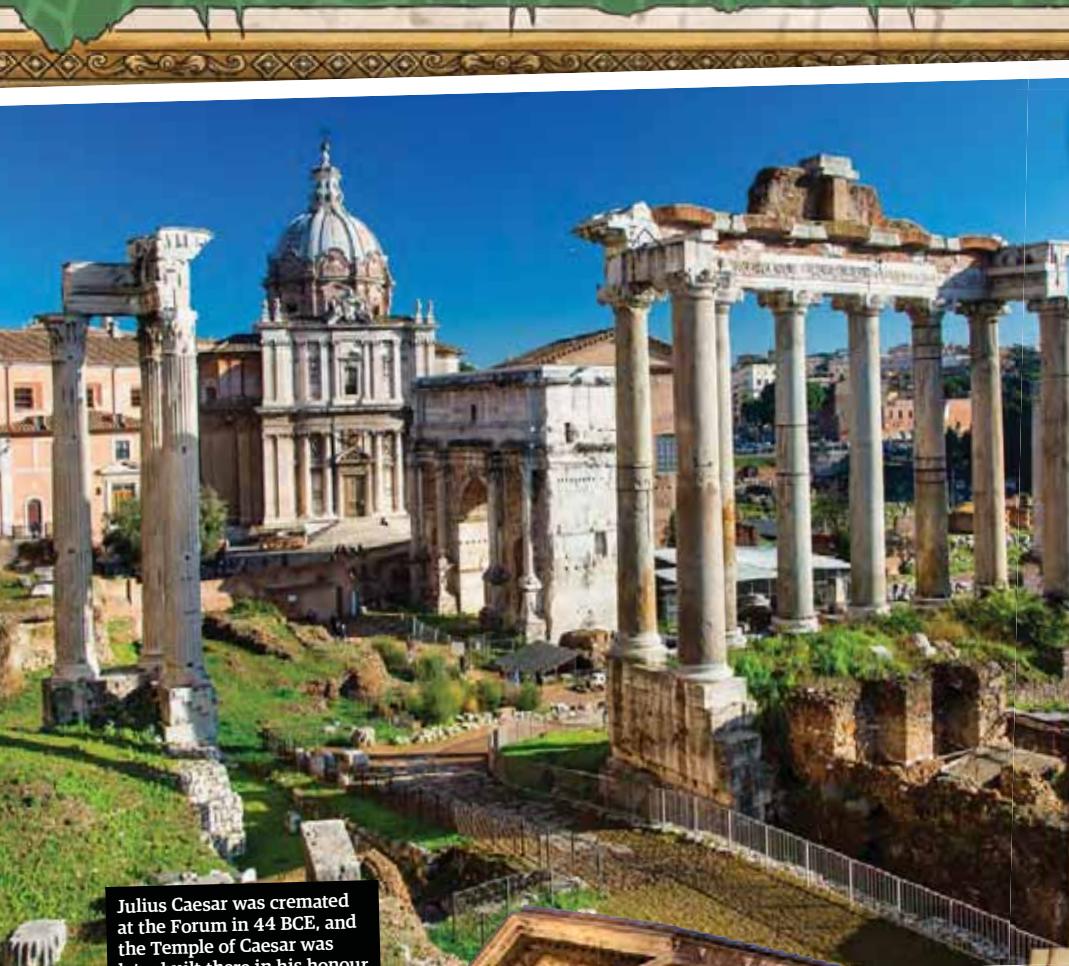
Built between 27 BCE and 68 CE, it was under construction years before the Colosseum. This isn't amazing in and of itself – one in Pompeii is older still – but Pula Arena is largely unspoiled. All four of its side towers are intact, which is unique, and the reason why it had such a long period of construction is because it was originally created using timber before being replaced by stone.

Even so, work didn't stop once this 20,000 capacity venue was first completed. It was then expanded, the locally sourced limestone walls becoming ever more dominant. But look at how it effortlessly tapers from three storeys to two – a necessary move because the oval amphitheatre was constructed on a slope yet so beautifully done.

What is more remarkable is that, even after all this time, the arena is still being used – although it's not hosting fiercely fought gladiator bouts these days. The underground chambers and passages now hold exhibitions about the production of olive oil, and the Foo Fighters are among the bands to have recently played gigs in the arena!

During the Second World War, the Italians considered moving the arena, piece by piece, to Italy





Julius Caesar was cremated at the Forum in 44 BCE, and the Temple of Caesar was later built there in his honour

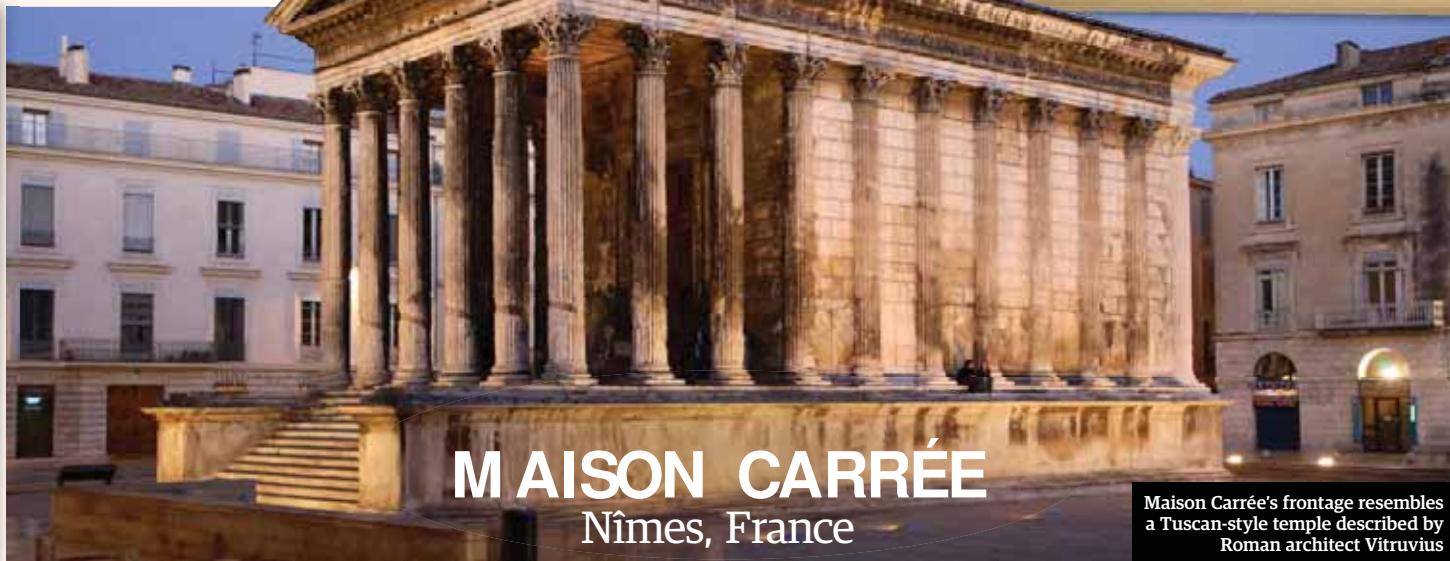
THE ROMAN FORUM

Rome, Italy

Once the bustling heart of Ancient Rome, the Forum – built on drained, marshy land between the Capitoline Hill and Palatine Hills – was originally created as a marketplace. It evolved into a public meeting area of great importance, hosting events and gatherings that prompted the building of basilicas and grandiose temples.

Colonnades, columns, statues and arches added to the architectural splendour of this monumental site, providing a splendid backdrop for the business meetings, religious ceremonies, criminal trials and political shenanigans that took place there. Ancient visitors could sometimes witness brutal scenes, especially when the Forum hosted gladiatorial battles or when the Romans severed the heads and hands of their political enemies and put them on display.

Modern-day visitors will see no such thing. Today, the Forum is a sprawl of ruins close to the Colosseum and it can take a little bit of imagination to piece it all together. Some parts are well-preserved, notably the Curia Julia, original seat of the Roman Senate built in 44 BCE that was converted into a basilica in the 7th century CE. The front porch of the Temple of Saturn also still stands at the western end, its eight surviving columns standing tall and proud.



MAISON CARRÉE

Nîmes, France

Even though it's located in the south of France, Nîmes is a very Roman-esque city. That's perhaps unsurprising given it became a legionary veterans' colony around 28 BCE and was later made capital of the Narbonne province by Emperor Augustus.

As with other colonies, Nîmes was self-governing, yet it benefited from great investment including a wide defensive wall made up of ramparts and circular towers. Of

most note, however, is the Maison Carrée, one of the world's best-preserved Roman temples. Built around 19 BCE during Augustus' reign, it was later dedicated to Gaius and Lucius Caesar, Augustus' grandsons and adopted heirs, after their premature deaths. Mathematically well-proportioned and typical of Augustan classicism, it eventually became a church in the 4th century which no doubt saved it from destruction following the fall of the Empire.

Maison Carrée's frontage resembles a Tuscan-style temple described by Roman architect Vitruvius

Anything other than preservation of this grand, imposing building would feel like a crime. There's so much detail to enjoy in a structure some 26 metres (85 feet) long and 14 metres (46 feet) wide. It sits atop a 2.65-metre (nine-foot) podium fronted by stairs, both of which were rebuilt in 1822. The most recent restoration was completed in 2006, ensuring what now houses a 3D film retracing Nîmes' past looks splendid in its original white colouring.



Discover how the greatest empires in history were forged

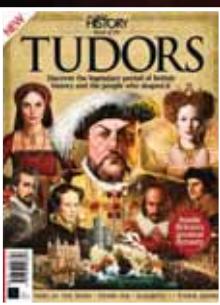
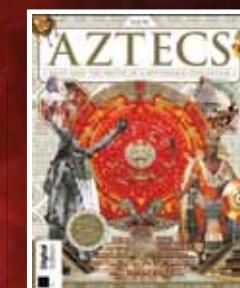
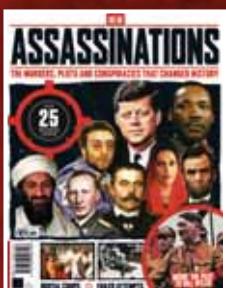
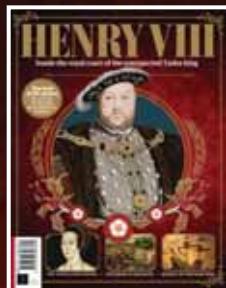
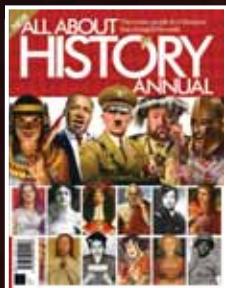
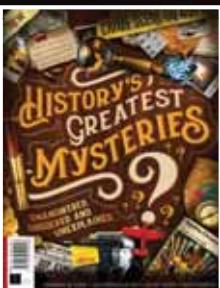
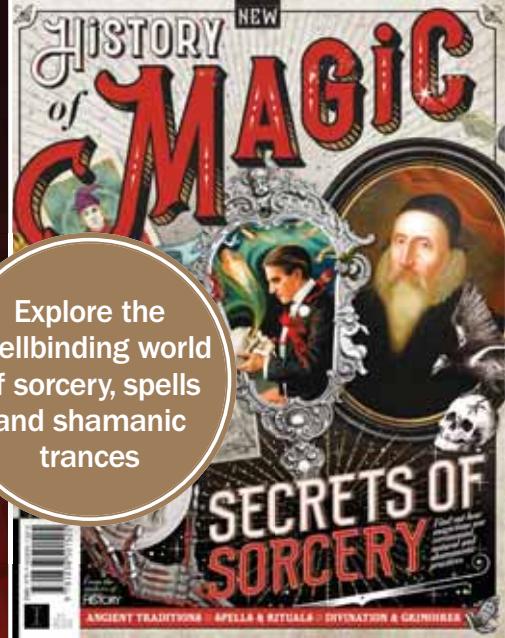
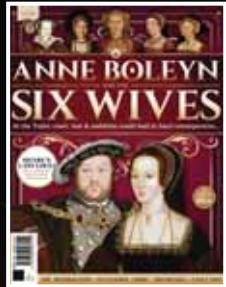


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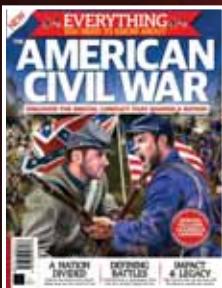
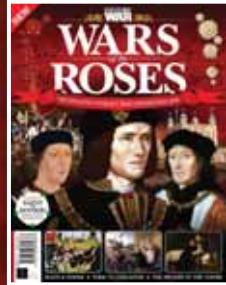
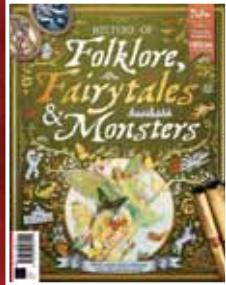
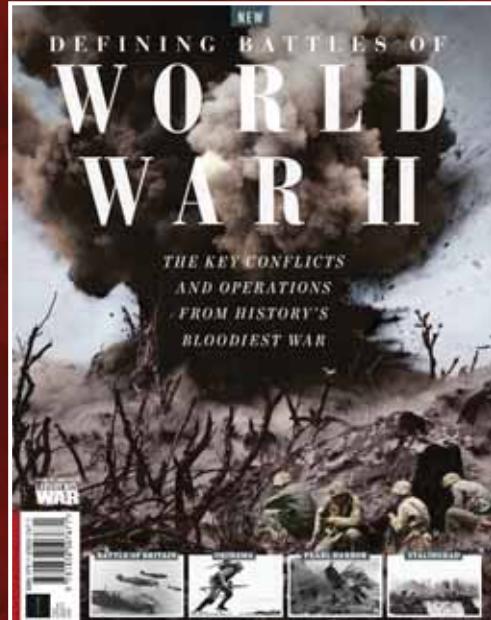
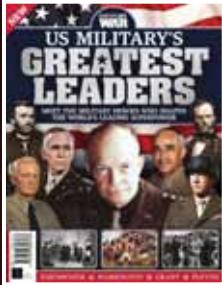
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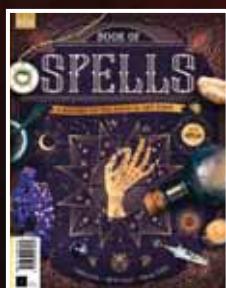
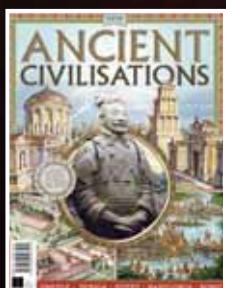
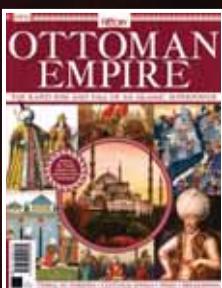
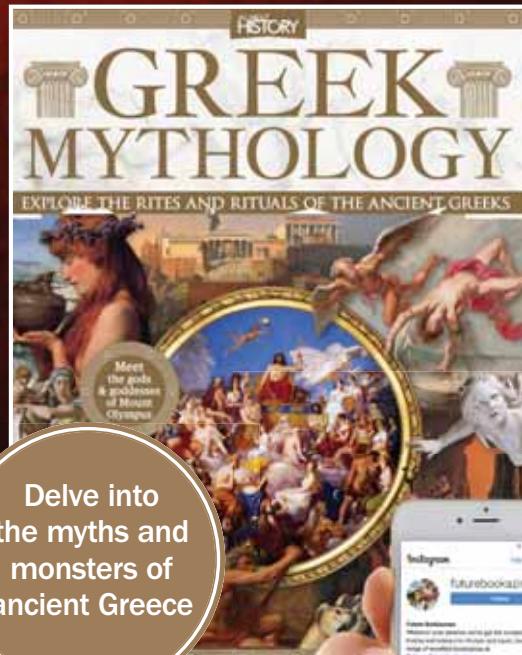
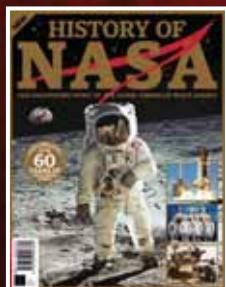
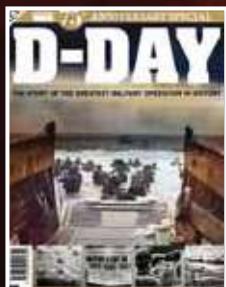
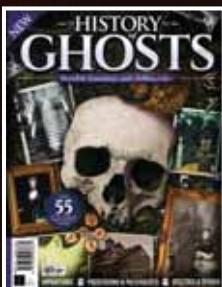


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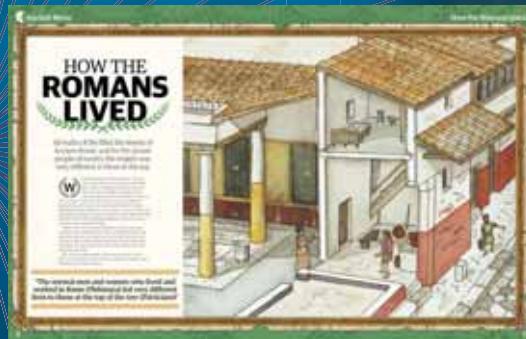
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